

There Will Come Soft Rains Analytical Essay: How does Ray Bradbury make the opening so dramatic?

This section of *There Will Come Soft Rains* is dramatic as the author contrasts the happy and joyful life beforehand¹ with the devastation after the nuclear war. There are constant reminders for the reader of the absence of humans and the hostility of the new environment. By lulling the reader into a false sense of security, the writer successfully makes the revelation of the truth even more striking.

Bradbury juxtaposes an image of happiness and positivity with the shock of nuclear destruction, at first describing the cheerful aspect of the scene before unveiling the real horror. The author describes a typically joyful image of the sun emerging from the rain, associated with rainbows, beauty and peace. However, the next sentence reveals the sinister reality, with the use of the word “alone” to describe the house; the short sentences emphasise the point. The phrase “radioactive glow” contrasts beauty with danger, as the word “radioactive” suggests self-destruction and nuclear war. While the other hand, the word “glow” has connotations of being angelic and sweet, in this context it suggests something unnatural and sickly. The fact that this glow “could be seen for miles” reveals the large scale and intensity of the event. Despite the usage² of the verb ‘to see’, there was no-one there to see the damage.³ The clock continues chiming the hours, oblivious to the shock of nuclear annihilation: “Ten-fifteen.” Once again, the author describes a positive image with “golden fountains” and “scatterings of brightness” before revealing the striking nature of “the charred west side”. The use of the adjective “entire” shows the immense scale of the devastation. The writer contrasts the shocking silhouettes on the wall with the childish innocence of the boy and girl and the serenity of this ideal family life.⁴ Bradbury never names the family members, since these are the last vaporised remnants of humanity. The use of the adjective “titanic” reminds the reader of the disastrous sinking of the Titanic in contrast to the happy play of the children. In general, the way the author first outlines the bright features before exposing the truth makes this section of the short story more moving and striking each time the reader finds out the truth about this post-apocalyptic world.

The author frequently hints at the absence of humans and life throughout this section of the short story. Following the description of the wall is the “falling light”, contrasting death with beauty and brightness. The adjective “gentle” suggests quietness, while the use of a sprinkler just after it has rained presents the house’s now purposeless abundance and plenty. The phrase “the gods had gone away” suggests a world without meaning and without importance, since religion without gods is pointless, and the usage of the double adverb “senselessly, uselessly” complements the meaning. In terms of emotions, the house only has the worst human qualities of fright and anger, shown by the repeated use of the word “angry” to describe the mice. Bereft of humans, the house rejects the animals, such as the “lonely foxes and whining cats” and its paranoid, “old-maidenly”⁵ mechanical behaviour prevents even a sparrow from touching the house. The dog, ‘man’s best friend’, which was once cared for and loved, “whined ... on the front porch”. With the disappearance of humanity, not even the house has a kind and human element, lacking sympathy and not providing any food, despite an excess of it, especially as the “stove was making pancakes” at the time. A dog is “hysterically

¹before what?

²“use”, not “usage”

³so, what’s the analysis?

⁴you can develop this further

⁵comment on this

yelping” when it is in pain and only now does the house realise the absence of its owners, but still ignores the family pet. “Covered with sores”, neither the dog nor any life can survive the consequences of the nuclear war due to radiation sickness.⁶ Once the dog died, the house brutally took no notice and still routinely “sang” the time, and with no sentimental connection or attachment, mechanically disposed of the dog in fifteen minutes. The juxtaposition of the personified house and the remnants of true life present the house as an inhospitable environment. The short sentence “The dog was gone”, separated with a line break, shows that there was no emotional response from the house, only causing the incinerator, likened to Baal, one of the demon princes of Hell, to glow “suddenly”. Ironically, humans had created nuclear weapons to defend themselves, yet by using them terminated all life, including humanity itself. Life without humans cannot survive in this unusually new and hostile environment; only the machines have “outlived” mankind.

The personified, automatic and senseless house is full of nature, living on in a mechanical form. Robotic mice scurry over the floor, appearing to express an emotion of anger as the dog “moved in and through the house, tracking mud.” This house is full of electrical mice and rats - “an altar with ten thousand attendants”, and although these cleaning creatures may seem useful at first, they have no compassion for the dog. The author further emphasises the absence of humanity with preparations to play bridge over lunch. The verb “sprouted” has connotations with plants, although there are none, as nature has been overtaken by machines, while the verb “fluttered” is reminiscent of butterflies. “Manifested” is a calm action, adding to the dream-like nature of this ideal life - the American dream. This is in contrast to the abrupt, empty and short sentence “Music played”, reminding us of the absence of the humans. Short sentences that are devoid of emotion or judgement resemble a dry police report of a crime scene. The next sentence, on a new line, starts with the conjunction “but” which makes the silence of the tables even more striking. The choice of language intensifies the drama of this senseless life without living beings, which allows for a greater impact on the reader. The presentation of the silent personified house makes this section of the passage more dramatic, as the mechanical and unsympathetic nature of the home is revealed.

In conclusion, this section of the story personifies the house and reveals the true horror of the situation. Bradbury makes this part more dramatic than the rest by creating tension and then detailing the truth and the revelation of the nuclear aftermath.

Teacher’s comments

Mark: 20/25 *Some very strong bits of analysis — but also moments of vagueness where you don't analyse*

See footnotes for specific remarks.

⁶more analysis necessary in this section