

ALL SUMMER IN A DAY

“All Summer in a Day,” a short story by prolific science fiction writer Ray Bradbury, was first published in 1954 in *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction*. Best known for the 1953 dystopian novel *Fahrenheit 451* and short story collections, including 1950’s *The Martian Chronicles* and *The Illustrated Man*, Bradbury received a Pulitzer Citation in 2007. In an obituary for the author in 2012, *The New York Times* referred to Bradbury as, “the writer most responsible for bringing modern science fiction into the literary mainstream.”

In “All Summer in a Day,” a group of young children and their parents live on a futuristic Venus. The schoolchildren are nine years old and are in class awaiting a rare occurrence on the planet. It has been raining nonstop for seven years, but on this day, scientists have predicted that the sun will appear for a very brief period of time. The last time the sun shone was when the children were only two years old and they hold no memories of the event. They have no concept of the look or feel of the sun. In school, they have been preparing for the day with

lessons about the sun and writing poems about it. One child in the class is different from the others.

Margot is a frail-looking girl whom the other children dislike. Margot lived on Earth, in Ohio, until she was five years old. She has many memories of the sun and unlike the others, has an idea of what to expect from its pending appearance. When Margot tells the other children that the sun is round like a penny and hot like a fire, they accuse her of lying. She isolates herself from the others; she has been in a state of depression for most of the time she has lived on Venus. There is talk circulating that her parents are considering leaving the underground colony in which they live on Venus and taking Margot back to their former home on Earth.

As Margot stands alone staring out of a window, waiting for the rain to subside and the sun to appear, the other children begin to torment her. One of the boys in the class tells her the whole thing is nothing more than a joke and that nothing is going to happen with the sun. While the teacher is away, the children grab Margot and lock her in a closet. Margot is powerless to stop them. When the teacher returns, she leads the children through a tunnel to the

colony's exit. She does not realize that Margot is not among the students. Once they are outside for a short while, the rain stops and the sun makes its appearance. The children run around in the sunshine and find the experience to be more than they ever imagined. They realize how much better it is than the sun lamps that are utilized in their colony.

A bit of time passes as the children continue to enjoy their brief time in the sun. A girl cries out as she observes a large raindrop sitting on her hand, a sign that the rain is returning and the sun will soon vanish. All of the children freeze. They think about the experience they have just had and the feeling of the sun on their skin. As the rain clouds take over the sky, the sun disappears from view, and the rainfall intensifies. The children pause for one last moment realizing how special the experience has been, then enter the tunnel to return to class. The students ask their teacher if it will really be another seven years before the sun returns. At that point, someone remembers that Margot is still locked in the closet.

Margot, they realize, has been locked in the closet for the entire time they were outside enjoying the

sun. They slowly, nervously, approach the closet where they had put her. There are no noises coming from behind the closed door. They unlock and open the door, and Margot slowly walks out. She will have to wait another seven years to see the sun.

“All Summer in a Day” uses Margot’s struggle to fit in having arrived on Venus after the others and images, such as the pale skin of the children, metaphorically. As Ray Bradbury told the *Paris Review*, this is a literary device he values. “Do you know why teachers use me? Because I speak in tongues. I write metaphors. Every one of my stories is a metaphor you can remember. The great religions are all metaphor. We appreciate things like Daniel and the lion’s den, and the Tower of Babel. People remember these metaphors because they are so vivid you can’t get free of them and that’s what kids like in school. They read about rocket ships and encounters in space, tales of dinosaurs. All my life I’ve been running through the fields and picking up bright objects. I turn one over and say, Yeah, there’s a story.”