

All of Summer in a Day



all
summer
in a
day

The central message of "All Summer in a Day" is that people often act cruelly against those who are different from them

What themes and emotions do you see?

- Isolation
- Jealousy
- Bullying
- Isolation
- Colonization
- Acceptance
- Xenophobia
- Lack of empathy / disbelief
- Scapegoat and victimize those who are different
- Pride
- Greed

Short Synopsis

The story is about a class of 9-year old students on Venus, which, in this story, is a world of constant rainstorms, where the sun is only visible for two hours every seven years.

One of the children, Margot, moved to Venus from Earth five years earlier and is the only one who remembers the sun, since it shines regularly on Earth. She describes the sun to the other children as being like a "penny" or "fire in the stove". The other children, being too young to have ever seen it themselves, do not believe her. Just before the sun comes out, a boy named William rallies the other children, and they lock Margot in a closet down a tunnel.

The teacher arrives to take the class outside to enjoy their hour of sunshine while Margot is banging on the door. In their astonishment and joy, they all forget about Margot and gleefully rush to play outside, savoring every second of their newfound freedom.

It begins to rain again, and the children start crying once they realize they won't get to see the sun again for another seven years. The children run back inside as the sun disappears and it starts storming. At this point, one of them remembers Margot.

They let her out of the closet and stood frozen, ashamed over what they had done now that they finally understood what she had been missing.

Describe the psychology of the protagonist, Margot

Margot is a delicate and pale child, one who keeps to herself. Having moved to Venus at the age of 4, she can remember life without the constant drumming of raindrops, life with golden sunshine. Because the other children have only memories of Venus and its wet atmosphere, they cannot understand Margot and her longing for a different life. This difference in perspectives creates in Margot an easy target for bullying; it also causes her to remain apart from the other 9-year-olds, giving her an air of loneliness and sadness.

The sun inspires Margot to be her best, most creative self, and so she craves it desperately. While the lack of sunshine is an obvious and constant refrain in the story, no character more strongly represents the negative effects of its absence than Margot.

Describe the psychology of the antagonist, William

William is the main bully, the character who might be said to embody the feelings of the rest of the children and the one who goads them on. Acting, perhaps, from a sense of jealousy and the inability to understand Margot, he speaks harshly to her and shoves her, encouraging the other children to treat her in the same hostile manner. Bradbury does not describe William's physical characteristics, so the character might be understood to be a type for bullies' actions, not their appearances.

Describe the psychology of the antagonist's support, the children

Margot and William are the only named characters in the story, with the rest of the students in the classroom being referred to en masse as the children. These children are followers; they support William's actions and don't consider how their actions will affect Margot. Their thoughtlessness doesn't extend merely to Margot, either. By following William blindly, they don't consider the impact their actions might have on their own feelings. They are creatures of the moment, and they experience enjoyment and displeasure according to the nature of the strongest stimulus in front of them.

Conformity? Groupthink? Lack of empathy? Seeking approval by conformity?

Describe the nature of the authority figure, the teacher

The teacher is neither named nor described by Bradbury, making her more of a token outside authority than a true part of the children's world. She performs her teacher's duties, reprimanding William for being cruel to Margot, but only in a limited capacity; she ultimately doesn't see or understand what is happening with the children. The children, then, might be seen as governing themselves despite the seeming presence of authority.

The story has been discussed as a metaphor for the importance of Earth and difficulty in surviving outside of the human natural environment

In the eyes of William, what was Margot's greatest crime?

What did YOU (the reader) connect with in the story? Why? (how did your own past connect with the narrative or characters or themes?)

If the story were to be extended, how might the children respond? Would they learn there are consequences to bullying (can they learn this without empathy?) Would there be reconciliation? How might the children atone for their actions?

What additional psychology did you see in the story?

Ray Bradbury

Born 1920 in Illinois

Grew up in Arizona and Los Angeles

Rejected from WWII draft due to poor eyesight

First major writing at age 22

Passed 2012 (age 91) in California

Married at age 27, four daughters

Mom was a Swedish immigrant, dad a telephone lineman of English ancestry.

Democrat until he became disillusioned by LBJ's handling of Vietnam, then switched to Republican

Also wrote Fahrenheit 451 (dystopian 1953)

↳ Book burning, censorship, McCarthy era, ideological repression in USSR

Something Wicked this Way Comes (1962, fantasy/horror)

↳ Traveling carnival, two 13-yr old boys, Mr Dark who gets power from souls who visit carnival

