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The Other Foot by Ray Bradbury.

Mars, which has been settled by African Americans twenty years earlier.

Characters.

Willie Johnson - Martian settler seeking revenge on his parents' death by lynching.

Hattie Johnson - Wife of Willie Johnson.

Three unnamed sons - The Johnson children.

Elizabeth Brown - Neighbor of the Johnsons.

Mr. Brown - Husband of Elisabeth Brown who harbors no desire for revenge.

Trolley operator - Approves of the White section painted for his trolley.

Mayor - Tries to prevent the mob forming around Willie Johnson.

Dr Phillips - One of the men who killed Willie Johnson's parents many years ago.

Mr. Burton - One of the men who killed Willie Johnson's parents many years ago.

Old Man - Spokesperson for the first rocket of white people to land on Mars.

Protagonist.

Willie Johnson, who wishes revenge for his parents' death at the hands of white racists on Earth.

Antagonist.

The unnamed old white man who arrives in the rocket and asks for mercy on behalf of Earthians.

Climax.

The old man explains that the people and places where Johnson's parents were killed are now all gone.

Outcome.

Johnson backs off from his revenge, deciding it's time for a new start.

Themes.

The main theme is the emptiness of revenge: twenty years after the fact, Willie Johnson still remembers the death of his parents and cannot forgive the white people responsible. However, related to this is the theme of bigotry: that it can assert itself anywhere where there is a majority that can oppress a minority. As part of these themes, we see the danger and allure of mobs as a way to promote dangerous ideas, to play upon the baser instincts of humans.

Summary.

The children of Hattie Johnson are excited at the news of a white man arriving on Mars. Hattie hadn't seen any white men since the Negroes moved to Mars twenty years earlier, settling down on a new planet while the old planet waged war on itself and its inhabitants blew each other up. She tells the children to stay behind and checks in on Elizabeth Brown's house, down the line; she sees the Browns in their car, getting ready to see

the white man. When Hattie asks if they're planning to lynch the white man, everybody laughs at the notion.

Hattie's husband Willie then drives by in his car, with a very different opinion: he's going home to get guns, remembering how his father was hung on Knockwood Hill by Dr. Phillips and Mr. Burton, while his mother was shot to death. Hattie asks if the white people would be allowed to live on Mars, and Willie says they'll live in the same conditions the Negroes faced back on Earth, now that the shoe's on the other foot. At home, Willie gets the guns from the attic; the children ask their father about the white man and he locks them in the house. He gets a bucket of paint and stencil from the garage, as well as a rope which he ties into a hangman's knot.

He and Hattie leave to meet the rocket, and Hattie sees other cars with guns; Willie had spoken with them on his way home. At the landing area, Willie hands out guns and then stops a trolley, where he paints a sign for Whites to sit in the rear section. He calls together people to paint similar signs on all trolleys, rope off the last two rows of theaters for whites, and calls to enact laws barring interracial marriage and enforcing a minimum wage for whites. The mayor protests at all this action, but Willie only tells his mob that they'll elect a new mayor.

The rocket lands and an old white man emerges. He doesn't give his name but explains how a third world war began after the Negroes left for Mars and ended only last year. The major cities of the world were burned, and as he listed the places that were destroyed, the gathered crowd responded to places that were familiar to them. When he mentions Greenwater, Alabama, Willie responds; it was where he was born. The old man continues and admits to the stupidity of those still on Earth, that they're willing to work for the Negroes of Mars in the humblest positions, if only they'll be allowed to come here.

Hattie senses that Willie is the key to stopping the mob from acting violently. She asks about Knockwood Hill in Greenwater, and the old man speaks to someone inside the rocket and pulls out photos of how the hill and the oak tree where his father was lynched have both disappeared. The men who killed Willie's father are dead, the trees have all burnt, the houses of everyone are gone. Willie remembers Earth and realizes it's all gone; he drops the rope he's holding. He decides it's time for a new start. On the drive home, Willie talks about how the white man is now as lonely as the Negroes had long been, and now they can all start over on the same level. At home, Hattie lets out the children, who ask Willie if he saw the white man. Willie says that for the first time, he'd seen the white man with clarity.

Notes.

Bradbury sees this story as best paired with the story "Way Up in the Air" from *The Martian Chronicles*, which shows an actual exodus from Earth to Mars by African Americans tired of racism on their home planet.

The other foot essay.

In the short story *The Other Foot* by Ray Bradbury, from the anthology *The Illustrated Man*, the important idea of the story is the theme revenge and forgiveness, this is shown throughout the story in Willie and Hattie's relationship, the setting that has been created on Mars, and the third way revenge and forgiveness is shown is by the conversation between Willie and the White man. Ray Bradbury wants the reader to learn that revenge may feel like the best option at the time but is better for everyone in long run to just forgive. One way we learn about the theme forgiveness in *The Other Foot* is through Hattie and Willie's relationship. Ray Bradbury created tension between the two making a twist in the story, when Hattie hears about the White man coming to Mars she wants to forgive, but Willie wants revenge for what the whites had done to him and his race. An example that show us this is when Hattie asks Willie "Ain't you gonna let the white people live up here." This quote shows that Hattie had already considered forgiveness, Willie was still set on getting revenge and whenever Hattie tried to change his mind he just ignored her. It also shows us Hattie's confusion when Willie wants revenge for something that happened 20 years ago, as much as Hattie tried to talk Willie out of revenge he still didn't listen and Hattie had to accept that Willie wanted revenge but she still didn't agree with it. This created a disagreement between him and his wife. What Ray Bradbury wants us to learn is that every person will have different ways of dealing with things and that even though you might not agree with them sometimes it's better in the long run if you accept it. Another way we can learn forgiveness through the short story is through the setting on Mars. Ray Bradbury created a world on Mars where 'the shoe is on the other foot.' On Mars the roles were switched and the Black people had the power and had the opportunity to take revenge on the White people. An example of this is when Willie wants to get revenge for what the Whites had done to them many years ago. "Everybody's talking. Everybody's thought on this day, thinking it'd never be. Thinking. What kind of day would it be if the white man ever came up here to Mars? But here's the day, and we can't run away." This quote shows that Willie knows that he has to accept that the White man is coming to Mars because there's no way around it. He gets the whole town in on his revenge and plans it all out, but once the White man arrives and tells Willie about what has happened on earth and they find out that they grew up in the same area. This makes Willie realise that their lives weren't all that different as kids and that maybe forgiveness was the best option. What Ray Bradbury wants us to learn here is that sometimes if you look at a situation differently you might realise that forgiveness is the best thing to do and and revenge will only make things worse. The third way the important idea of revenge is shown in the text through Willie. An example of revenge is when Hattie asked Willie if he was going to let the white people on Mars, Willie replied "Sure, they can come up and live and work here; why, certainly. All they got to do to deserve it is live in their own small part of town, the slums, and shine our shoes for us, and mop up our trash, and sit in the last row in the balcony. That's all we ask. And once a week we hang one or two of them. Simple!" This quote shows Willies anger towards the Whites, but it also shows that the Blacks have the power over the whites and the shoe is now on the other foot. Willie wants to treat the whites the same way they had been treated, he wanted the whites to feel the same pain he had been through, he wanted revenge. What the author wants us to think about is that when we act out of anger and strong feelings it may feel like the right thing to do at the time but in the end it's always best for everyone to just forgive. In the short story *The Other Foot* by Ray Bradbury, the important idea of the story is the theme revenge and forgiveness, this is shown throughout the story in Willie and Hattie's relationship, another way revenge and forgiveness is shown is through the setting that Ray Bradbury has created on Mars, and the third way this theme is shown through Willie and how he reacts to the white man coming to Mars. What I took from this story is that although revenge seems the best and fastest way to fix everything but in actual fact it's a lot better for you and everyone else involved if you just decide to forgive and move on. This was the main idea Ray Bradbury covered throughout the story.

"The Other Foot" by Ray Bradbury.

"THE OTHER FOOT" BY RAY BRADBURY "The Other Foot" by Ray Bradbury is a thought-provoking short story about prejudice and racism. It has all the qualities of a good short story, such as an interesting plot, an unusual yet relevant setting and excellent characterisation. These qualities, and some others, help to effectively convey the author's message that we should not be hypocritical of others, and these qualities certainly made it more interesting for me. The story is set in a small town on Mars in 1985, where all its inhabitants are black. The people flew to Mars twenty years ago to get away from Earth because they were being treated so badly by the white people, and since then, they had lived quite happily on their own. However, one day, a rocket from Earth lands in the town; an old white man steps out and tells everyone how Earth has been destroyed by war and now there is nothing left. He asks the people of Mars for their help and to let the white people come and live on Mars with them. . read more.

He talks to them and tells them to paint signs and rope off areas of seating in some places for the new white people, and all this time Hattie "stood tall and silent by him". Their three children bring some humour into the story, as they play and joke and "dance around in the dusty yard". They have never seen a white man before and they find the concept hilarious - "White arms!" hooted the boys", "White faces! Really?" They are young and innocent and do not understand the dangers of the white man. "The Other Foot" has an exciting and interesting plot. The story begins very well and arouses the reader's attention. "They came out of restaurants and cafes and hotels and looked at the sky". From this, we know that it must be something unusual and quite fantastic for everyone to stop what they were doing and just look at the sky. They are looking at something strange and the reader wants to know what it is and so wants to read on. Ironically, we find out later that we, the white people, are the strange ones that they were so fascinated by. . read more.

They started a whole new way of life and it seemed very unlikely that the white people would bother them. The story is structured very well. The length of sentences and paragraphs vary depending on the mood and tone that is being created. Some of the paragraphs are long and descriptive and there is some excellent imagery used - "There was a silence of silences. a silence that came down like a pressure from a distant storm" But sometimes, the paragraphs are very short with just a few words in them. These sentences are often repeated to build tension - "no one moved" is repeated to emphasise that everyone was stunned by what the white man was saying and nobody knows how to react to it. When Hattie's children ask her what the white man is like, she says "you'll find out. Yes indeed, you'll find out." This lets us see how scared she is herself about what might happen. These are just some of the qualities that make "The Other Foot" an outstanding short story. Bradbury succeeds in creating a remarkable setting, bringing his characters to life and, of course, in conveying his message that is both important and relevant to today's society, and I think this was definitely a very enjoyable short story. Catriona McCaig . read more.

This student written piece of work is one of many that can be found in our GCSE Miscellaneous section.

The Other Foot by Ray Bradbury.

◆ The Other Foot◆ (in The Illustrated Man) Ray◆s religious feelings exhibited in the story. I re-read the story this morning and enjoyed it.

While there are a lot of themes in here, the line between something being religious and something being moral is sometimes pretty fine. It is not the case that all morality comes necessarily from religion, although to deny that the majority of the world◆s morality comes from religious teachings and traditions seems a bit of a stretch. Some of the moral themes are in various religious teachings, but they could also be morality developed in a variety of philosophical traditions.

Also, it may be that the ◆religious◆ writings may not necessarily reflect Bradbury◆s feelings about religion, so much as they may reflect things he wants to say about religion through his fiction ◆ whether they are his views or not. I◆ll use the term religious to include the concept of morality as well. Again, this is not to say that morality could not be developed outside religion, but a recognition that most morality does, in point of fact, come through religious teachings/traditions.

Part of the story depends on an understanding of race relations in America. ◆ The Illustrated Man◆ was first published (I think) in 1951. In those days, there were still separate drinking fountains, restrooms, seats, schools, churches, etc., in many parts of America. The story mentions that the blacks left earth in 1965 ◆ a time where race relations were still very controversial (◆All in the Family◆ was still not even on television, yet). So there was still very, very strong problems in America with racism.

Also, in 1951, the Korean War had just ended, there was a palpable fear of nuclear war (I still remember the bombing drills in school, where we would run to the wall, crouch down with our heads towards the wall, and cover the back of our necks with our hands).

The story deals with several obvious themes: Remembering, forgiving, beginning anew, vengeance, etc.

When there is anticipation of white men coming in the rocket, all the wonder (in children ◆ ◆are his hands white?!◆) and the anger of the adults (who remember family members shot, lynched, and segregated from the larger community and struck in positions of servility) come to the fore.

Hattie Johnson wants there to be a peaceful reception, but her husband, Willie, gets together the ropes and guns. He organizes the town to paint signs designating ◆white only◆ locations. The mayor, Hattie, and about half the town are not comfortable returning hate for hate. Willie, and many others, feel that this is all that is possible.

Part of the theme is in this idea of remembering all the sins and pain and loss. Hattie remonstrates against Willie saying that is not a Christian way to talk. Willie replies that Hattie must not remember the wrongs done. The idea of remembering and hanging on to this hatred is that memory allows this pain to be fomented into the future. In fact, Willie seems to consciously fan the flames of resentment. He is angry when people don◆t remember. ◆ You remember?◆, ◆ You remember how they hung my father on Knockwood Hill and shot my mother? You remember? Or you got a memory that◆s short like the other.?◆ Hattie replies that she remembers. ◆ You remember Dr. Phillips and Mr. Burton and their big houses, and my mother◆s washing shack, and Dad working when he was old . . ◆ The theme of remembering sin and wrongs is a significant theme here. As long as we remember the past (in the sense of not being able to move ahead and staying emotionally mired in it) we cannot really

move ahead. We foster a climate of hatred.

The mayor, in part of his argument with Willie makes this very point, "You're making a mob, Willie Johnson. That's the idea. The same thing you always hated when you were a kid. You're no better than some of those white men you yell about."

Vengeance and payback are primary themes, also. Several times throughout the story, Willie tosses morality away by saying that the shoe is on the other foot now. The idea of payback seems to undermine the concept of morality. If you're getting revenge or paying someone back, this sense of retribution and justice overrides the pre-existing sense of what is morally wrong. Willie knows lynchings, killings and segregation are wrong, but because these represent "payback" he sets aside his own morality "vengeance overrules morality."

There is also a sense, as the story ends, and Willie is finally able to let go of his anger because his memories "because of the complete destruction of the place" of these travesties "become less real and vital. Payback has already occurred. The places where these horrible things occurred have been burned into non-existence. The vengeance has already taken place. If the white man has been destroyed, and is volunteering to come be servants, and has lost his racial pride, then the morality we assume exists for Willie begins to reassert itself. The whites are now on an even keel:

"Yes . . . The Lord's let us come through, a few here and a few there. And what happens next is up to all of us. The time for being fools is over. We got to be something else except fools. I knew that when he talked. I knew then that now the white man's as lonely as we've always been. He's got no home now, just like we didn't have one for so long. Now everything's even. We can start all over again on the same level."

I think an interesting thing is that Willie is swayed by two things: One is the speech the man gave, where he talked about the loss and willingness to come as servants and submit to whatever treatment the blacks deem fair. The other is in the pictures. The places where these crimes had occurred were all gone. But Willie (and others, we presume) needed the photographs to really make that emotionally real for them.

"Everything's gone. Here are the pictures, you can see for yourself". The pictures were there to be held and looked at and thought about. The rocket was full of pictures and answers to questions."

The combination of the story/speech (something abstract) and the pictures (something concrete) is what made Willie let go of his hatred and want to start something new and something even. It was time to stop being fools.