

Approved for use in 8th grade

Summary of the Work:

The Martian Chronicles, written by Ray Bradbury, is a science-fiction novel that documents life on Mars from January 1999 to October 2026. The novel essentially chronicles how humans take over the planet, wiping out the Martian race. War has wreaked havoc on planet earth and humans are desperate for new territory. Journal entries are told from the perspectives of Martians and humans. There are no main characters, but rather different voices that span throughout the novel.

In the beginning, humans attempt to inhabit the planet and the Martians do everything in their power to prevent this takeover from happening. Their amazing ability with telepathy and hypnosis help them to ward off some of the first explorers. In *The Third Expedition*, explorers land on Mars, but the area they land on is their simulated hometown years earlier. They believe they made a mistake when traveling and are still in America. The explorers see houses and green space that remind them of their own homes. The captain recognizes his home and is soon reunited with his parents who passed away years ago. Soon, all the explorers come into contact with loved ones who have passed away. All are happy until the captain begins to realize that this reunion with loved ones is not possible. The Martians are able to read the explorers' minds and memories in order to recreate nostalgia and memory, essentially trapping them into their death. The entry ends with all of the explorers killed.

The Martians' brilliant plans are thwarted, however, when the humans unknowingly bring with them disease and the majority of the Martians are soon killed off by the chicken pox. In the beginning, the planet is a beautiful mysterious place with numerous white moons, books that sing, and Martians that have golden skin with golden eyes. All of this life deteriorates as more and more humans come over and colonize the land. The humans are not concerned with what happens to the Martians, but with themselves and what they can do to survive in new territory. With their colonization, they bring old habits, ways of living, and even names that remind them of Earth—New York, New Texas, New Chicago. It does not take long for the whole planet to become devoid of people and life.

The journal entries become more and more foreboding as the novel proceeds towards the end. In November 2005, Walter, one of the lone survivors, looks for any other human beings that he can be around because all areas have been abandoned. When he is able to come into contact with one woman, the prospect of spending the rest of his life with her causes him to quickly jump back into his car and into complete solitude. In one of the next journal entries, there are absolutely no human beings and a computerized house runs itself. However, by the end of the day, it is completely destroyed and not able to function on its own.

The final journal entry occurs in October 2026. A family has left earth right before it was completely destroyed. The father tells his family that they have left to go on a fishing trip, but he then relays that they have no intention of ever going back to earth. He symbolically burns laws and constitutions created on Earth and tells the family that they are starting a new life on Mars. The final scene has the father showing the family Martians. He takes them to a canal and as they look down at the water, they see reflections of themselves. They have become the new Martians and the cycle of life on Mars begins again.

Professional Reviews and/or Critical Essays:

* Print resources are available from the library media center and libraries in the district. Contact any library media specialist to view the scholarly sources.

* Scholarly reviews are also available online through Books in Print and Gale. Contact the library media specialist to obtain username and password information to access the subscription database of full-text reviews.

Rationale:

The Martian Chronicles was written by Ray Bradbury in the 1950s. WWII had ended and the McCarthy era had begun, which sought to rid the country of any voices that dissented from the majority thought. One of the major strengths of the novel is how it can be used as an allegory for the many ways in which humans have destroyed, colonized, and oppressed others throughout history. The novel chronicles the take-over of Mars by humanity capable of the utmost violence. One has only to look at world history to realize the countless parallels that can be made between reality and science fiction. The lines become blurry between science fiction and a reflection of history. The Martians could be related to a number of oppressed groups that lost their lives because of man's selfishness and need to conquer, such as Native Americans in the United States, Tainos in the Caribbean, and so on.

When teaching this novel, links can easily be made to the dangers of capitalism, colonization, and slavery. Commentaries could be made on the dangers of censorship and how censorship seeks to silence people. This direct link can be made to McCarthyism and tied to another Bradbury novel, *Fahrenheit 451*. A thematic approach to this novel could create an entire curriculum weaving world history and literature together. There are a plethora of novels that parallel the ideas that come forth from *The Martian Chronicles* and that could be used effectively to add to these themes. These novels could come from a variety of genres: autobiographies, science fiction, fiction, and plays that work in documenting the dangers of an oppressive history.

The beauty of this novel is that it teaches history through poetry and imagery. In addition, the poetic prose of the novel is useful in teaching creative writing and poetry. The descriptive language throughout the book works well to create a haunting visual picture of the events that transpire over 50 years.

Noted Distinction:

- The O. Henry Memorial Award (1947 & 1948)
- The Benjamin Franklin Award (1954),
- The Aviation-Space Writers Association Award (1968),
- The World Fantasy Award (1977),
- The Jules Verne Award (1984),
- The Prometheus Award (1984),
- The Nebula Grand Master Award (1988),
- The Bram Stoker Award (1989)

Readability:

- Lexile Score: 740L
- Readability Level: 7

Martian Chronicles

by Ray Bradbury

(Published in 1950)

	<p>Learning Resources Guidelines:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">The novel meets the Learning Resources Guidelines. <p>Standard Alignment: (link)</p> <p>Approval:</p> <p>Submitted to Committee:</p> <p>Approved for Adoption:</p>
<p>Notes on the Text:</p> <p><i>(The best way to evaluate and understand a novel is to personally read the book in its entirety.)</i></p> <p>This novel includes the use of racial slurs, possible anti-American sentiments, and the use of science fiction. Within the novel, there are some characters who are clearly racist, who do not want their workers who are African American to go on a rocket to Mars. Although this novel is science fiction, the racist sentiments are not too far from the reality of what was going on in the United States at the time the novel was written. Therefore, the book can be a useful tool to comment on the reality of racism for African Americans during the 1950s.</p> <p>All of the explorers within the novel come from the United States. They are selfish in many ways and seek to colonize the land of Mars. This rhetoric could appear to be anti-American, yet clearly, Bradbury is commenting on the ills of humanity and is critiquing imperialistic world culture.</p>	<p>Connection to the Curriculum:</p> <p>A thematic approach to this novel could create an entire curriculum weaving world history and literature together. There are a plethora of novels that parallel the ideas that come forth from <i>The Martian Chronicles</i> and that could be used effectively to add to these themes. These novels could come from a variety of genres: autobiographies, science fiction, fiction, and plays that work in documenting the dangers of an oppressive history.</p> <p>The beauty of this novel is that it teaches history through poetry and imagery. In addition, the poetic prose of the novel is useful in teaching creative writing and poetry. The descriptive language throughout the book works well to create a haunting visual picture of the events that transpire over 50 years.</p>
<p>Additional Connections:</p> <p><i>(AP, Honors, Essential/Applied, Dramas, Films, etc.)</i></p> <p>Works that could be read in addition to this novel might include <i>1984</i> written by George Orwell and <i>Dawn</i> written by Octavia Butler. <i>1984</i> is a novel that uncovers the dangers of censorship and an omniscient government that seeks to oppress its people on many levels. It is a book that was written in a post-apocalyptic future, which cautions against government dictatorship.</p> <p>In <i>Dawn</i>, humanity is on the verge of extinction because of nuclear war. Aliens begin colonizing their land and the people; the protagonist, Lilit, fights for the human race. The novel is somewhat of a reverse of what happens in <i>The Martian Chronicles</i>, but the same themes run through it.</p>	