9th Grade ELA

Week of:

APRIL 6TH

WICHITA PUBLIC SCHOOLS
**9th, 10th, 11th and 12th Grades**

Your child should spend up to 90 minutes over the course of each day on this packet. Consider other family-friendly activities during the day such as:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Help with a chore, meal, or yardwork around the house.</th>
<th>Listen to age appropriate podcast and discuss with a friend.</th>
<th>Encourage someone with a compliment, text, or letter.</th>
<th>Listen to a free audio story at stories.audible.com</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Explore art at artsandculture.google.com/</td>
<td>Text or call a friend to say hello.</td>
<td>Journal about your experiences during this timeframe.</td>
<td>Mindful Minutes: Each day to focus on the 5 senses.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*All activities are optional. Parents/Guardians please practice responsibility, safety, and supervision.*

For students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) who need additional support, Parents/Guardians can refer to the Specialized Instruction and Supports webpage, contact their child’s IEP manager, and/or speak to the special education provider when you are contacted by them. Contact the IEP manager by emailing them directly or by contacting the school. The Specialized Instruction and Supports webpage can be accessed by clicking HERE or by navigating in a web browser to https://www.usd259.org/Page/17540

**WICHITA PUBLIC SCHOOLS**
**CONTINUOUS LEARNING HOTLINE AVAILABLE**
316-973-4443  
MARCH 30 – MAY 21, 2020  
MONDAY – FRIDAY  
11:00 AM – 1:00 PM ONLY

For Multilingual Education Services (MES) support, please call (316) 866-8000 (Spanish and Proprio) or (316) 866-8003 (Vietnamese).

*The Wichita Public Schools does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, age, veteran status or other legally protected classifications in its programs and activities.*
**9th Grade English Language Arts Packet Schedule: Week 2**


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Convey</strong> (kuhn-vey)</th>
<th><strong>Makeshift</strong> (meyk-shift)</th>
<th><strong>Scrabble</strong> (skrab-uh)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Make known, to let know</td>
<td>A temporary substitute</td>
<td>To grapple or struggle with</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Overlap</strong></th>
<th><strong>Protruding</strong> (prəˈtroʊdiNG)</th>
<th><strong>Re-assuring</strong> (rēˈSHoʊriNG)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To extend over and cover a part of something.</td>
<td>Sticking out; projecting:</td>
<td>To remove someone's doubts or fears:</td>
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</table>

- Read Aloud Accommodations are available on the specialized instruction and supports website referenced at the beginning of this packet.
Week 2: Read Aloud accommodations

9th: 694-729

Dream’s Winter – Recorded separately on our website
By the Waters of Babylon  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BL9bqmTX7gI
There Will Come Soft Rains  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=npk8Wi73r2c
World's End

What draws us to imagine doomsday scenarios? And why are they so entertaining?

Discuss It  Should the government keep a “Doomsday” plane or similar resource in continuous operation?
**UNIT INTRODUCTION**

**ESSENTIAL QUESTION:** Why do we try to imagine the future?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHOLE-CLASS LEARNING</th>
<th>SMALL-GROUP LEARNING</th>
<th>INDEPENDENT LEARNING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ANCHOR TEXT: SHORT STORY</td>
<td>MAGAZINE ARTICLE</td>
<td>GOVERNMENT WEBSITE ARTICLE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| By the Waters of Babylon  
Stephen Vincent Benét | The Nuclear Tourist  
George Johnson | Preparedness 101:  
Zombie Apocalypse  
Ali S. Khan |
| ANCHOR TEXT: SHORT STORY | POETRY COLLECTION 1 | NEWS ARTICLE |
| There Will Come Soft Rains  
Ray Bradbury | The beginning of the end of the world  
Lucille Clifton | The Secret Bunker Congress Never Used  
NPR |
| | The Powwow at the End of the World  
Sherman Alexie | |
| | A Song on the End of the World  
Czeslaw Milosz | |
| | MEDIA: RADIO BROADCAST | MEDIA: IMAGE GALLERY |
| | from Radiolab: War of the Worlds  
NPR | The End of the World Might Just Look Like This  
Megan Gambino |
| | MEDIA: RADIO BROADCAST | |
| | The Myth of the War of the Worlds Panic  
Jefferson Pooley and Michael Socolow | |
| | POETRY COLLECTION 2 | |
| | Fire and Ice  
Robert Frost | Perhaps the World Ends Here  
Joy Harjo |
| | MEDICAL ARTICLE | |
| | A Visit to the Doomsday Vault  
60 Minutes | |

**PERFORMANCE TASK**

**WRITING FOCUS:** Write a Narrative

**PERFORMANCE TASK**

**SPEAKING AND LISTENING FOCUS:** Create a Podcast

**PERFORMANCE-BASED ASSESSMENT PREP**

**Review Notes for a Narrative**

**PERFORMANCE-BASED ASSESSMENT**

**PROMPT:** Which matters more—the present or the future?
Unit Goals

Throughout this unit, you will deepen your understanding of literature about the future by reading, writing, speaking, presenting, and listening. These goals will help you succeed on the Unit Performance-Based Assessment.

Rate how well you meet these goals right now. You will revisit your ratings later when you reflect on your growth during this unit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCALE</th>
<th>NOT AT ALL WELL</th>
<th>NOT VERY WELL</th>
<th>SOMEWHAT WELL</th>
<th>VERY WELL</th>
<th>EXTREMELY WELL</th>
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**READING GOALS**

1. Evaluate written narratives by analyzing how authors craft their stories.

2. Expand your knowledge and use of academic and concept vocabulary.

**WRITING AND RESEARCH GOALS**

1. Write a narrative to convey an experience or event using effective techniques, well-chosen details, and well-structured sequences.

2. Conduct research projects of various lengths to explore a topic and clarify meaning.

**LANGUAGE GOALS**

1. Use adverbial and other types of clauses to convey precise meaning and add sentence variety to your writing and presentations.

**SPEAKING AND LISTENING GOALS**

1. Collaborate with your team to build on the ideas of others, develop consensus, and communicate.

2. Integrate audio, visuals, and text in presentations.
**Academic Vocabulary: Narrative**

Academic terms appear in all subjects and can help you read, write, and discuss with more precision. Here are five academic words that will be useful to you in this unit as you analyze and write narratives.

**Complete the chart.**
1. Review each word, its root, and the mentor sentences.
2. Use the information and your own knowledge to predict the meaning of each word.
3. For each word, list at least two related words.
4. Refer to a dictionary or other resources if needed.

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<td>2. A singer's emotional power can be more important than vocal technique.</td>
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<td>2. Your proposal for the new playground should include some sort of depiction, such as a drawing or map.</td>
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**ESSENTIAL QUESTION:** Why do we try to imagine the future?

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Chase sat with his back to the old dead tree, scratching at a patch of hard, blackened earth with his compass.

“So what do you dream of, kid?”

The Tribe on the Hill operates the way a football team did, back when there was such a thing. They’re an elite unit, comprised of specialists. It wasn’t long ago they took me in. They were impressed with my skills as a sneak: I got through two and a half layers of security before they nabbed me, nine paces from the Shed.

They accepted me because I’m a good shot—with a rock, a makeshift spear, or a rifle. But they’re not about to trust me with the latter. I wouldn’t expect them to.

Chase is a scrounge. He has status here. I don’t. One wrong word, one errant move, and they could throw me back down the hill, to waste away from starvation and thirst.

So I stared at a pill bug on its back, little gray legs flailing, trying to right itself. I’m not touching this one, or that one either.

Chase has a face that seems hacked out of flint, like an actor whose name I can’t remember. He’s old enough to be my father, I guess. That kind of thing doesn’t matter like it used to.

“I dream of snow,” he said, staring at me. Looking past me. I stretched my legs. The pill bug stopped scrabbling.

“Kids playing in snow,” he said. “Rosy cheeks. Little smiles. Like the kids on the old soup cans.”

The bug turned itself over. It started to run, then got near my left foot and stopped.
“I’m watching them through a tall, narrow window,” he said. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw him bend his head. I think he wanted me to look up. His eyes were so dark they seemed to be all pupils. They’re too bright for my liking, but not harsh.

“My dining room used to have windows like that. Do you remember dining rooms, kid?”

I lifted my heel so it was poised above the bug. Roly-poly, they also call them. It curled into a ball, its shell a series of overlapping blackish-brown wedges.

“Then there’s the flash,” Chase said. “Boom!” Something shook in the pit of my gut, from down beneath uneasiness and hunger.

“Then it goes black,” he said. “I stare out the window. I can still hear the kids. I can’t see them. They’re saying something. Whispering and laughing. For the life of me, I can’t make it out.”

He stood up. I flicked the bug away. Pill bugs have blue blood. I remember reading that a few years ago in a book I pulled out of a ditch, but I didn’t need to see this proved.

Chase tried driving his stick into the crusty earth, as if he were planting a flag. It snapped at a weak spot. He studied the broken end protruding from his fist as if it were trying to tell him something.

“I used to wake up in a sweat every time I heard the bang,” he said. “Now I don’t. Now I stay in the dream, straining…straining in sleep, to hear what those kids out there are saying.”

I looked up at him. His mouth had gone small, pulled to one side. He chewed at his inner lip. His eyes were wet. He tried to make them steely.

“The water bottles come out in a while,” he said. “Be ready. No one’s going to call you.”

My foot had missed the bug. It took off, following Chase, as if it heard and understood about the water.

John Carradine. That’s the actor’s name. I think I might have read that somewhere too.
Summary
Write a summary of “Dream’s Winter.” A summary is a concise, complete, and accurate overview of a text. It should not include a statement of your opinion or an analysis.

Launch Activity
Conduct a Small-Group Discussion  Consider this question: Is it possible to imagine the end of the world?

- Record your thoughts on the question in relation to the Launch Text, books you have read, and movies or programs you have watched. Explain your thinking.

- Gather in small groups. Each group should discuss the question, and group members should explain their thoughts and reasoning.

- Bring all the small groups together, and have a representative from each describe the group’s responses.

- Discuss as a class the different responses. Is it possible to imagine the end of the world? Why or why not?
QuickWrite

Consider class discussions, presentations, the video, and the Launch Text as you think about the prompt. Record your first thoughts here.

PROMPT: Which matters more—the present or the future?

ESSENTIAL QUESTION: Why do we try to imagine the future?

EVIDENCE LOG FOR WORLD’S END

Review your QuickWrite. Summarize your thoughts in one sentence to record in your Evidence Log. Then, record textual details or evidence from “Dream’s Winter” that support your thinking.

Prepare for the Performance-Based Assessment at the end of the unit by completing the Evidence Log after each selection.

Tool Kit
Evidence Log Model
ESSENTIAL QUESTION:

Why do we try to imagine the future?

Human beings are curious. We are explorers, unwilling to step back and let questions remain unanswered. Yet, there are limits to what we can know. For example, we cannot visit the future, no matter how hard we try. Instead, in literature, in movies, and in science, we work to imagine it. The stories that we tell as a result are sometimes reassuring and sometimes frightening. As you read, you will work with your whole class to explore literary visions of the world’s end. The selections you are going to read present two writers’ conceptions of a troubled future.

Whole-Class Learning Strategies

Throughout your life, in school, in your community, and in your career, you will continue to learn and work in large-group environments.

Review these strategies and the actions you can take to practice them as you work with your whole class. Add ideas of your own for each category.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRATEGY</th>
<th>ACTION PLAN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listen actively</td>
<td>• Eliminate distractions. For example, put your cellphone away.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Keep your eyes on the speaker.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clarify by asking questions</td>
<td>• If you’re confused, other people probably are, too. Ask a question to help your whole class.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• If you see that you are guessing, ask a question instead.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monitor understanding</td>
<td>• Notice what information you already know and be ready to build on it.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Ask for help if you are struggling.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interact and share ideas</td>
<td>• Share your ideas and answer questions, even if you are unsure.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Build on the ideas of others by adding details or making a connection.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Performance Task

Writing Focus

Write a Narrative

The Whole-Class readings illustrate the world after catastrophe has struck. After reading, you will write your own narrative about the world that remains in the wake of a similar catastrophe.

Anchor Text: Short Story

By the Waters of Babylon

Stephen Vincent Benét

What will John find when he travels to the Dead Places?

Anchor Text: Short Story

There Will Come Soft Rains

Ray Bradbury

In the aftermath of destruction, what do we leave behind?
**About the Author**

Stephen Vincent Benét (1898–1943) and his two siblings were clearly influenced by their father's love of literature, as they all grew up to be writers. Much of Benét's work centers on American history and folklore, including his most famous story, “The Devil and Daniel Webster,” and his epic poem about the Civil War, *John Brown’s Body*. The latter work won the Pulitzer Prize in 1929. At the time of his death, Benét was at work on a second epic poem, *Western Star*, which he planned to write as a narrative that would span five books. He finished only the first volume, which posthumously won him a second Pulitzer Prize when it was published in 1944.

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**By the Waters of Babylon**

**Concept Vocabulary**

You will encounter the following words as you read “By the Waters of Babylon.” Before reading, note how familiar you are with each word. Then, rank the words in order from most familiar (1) to least familiar (6).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WORD</th>
<th>YOUR RANKING</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>purified</td>
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<tr>
<td>bade</td>
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<td>stern</td>
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<td>fasting</td>
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<td>customs</td>
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<td>summoned</td>
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After completing the first read, come back to the concept vocabulary and review your rankings. Mark changes to your original rankings as needed.

**First Read FICTION**

Apply these strategies as you conduct your first read. You will have an opportunity to complete the close-read notes after your first read.

**STANDARDS**

Reading Literature
By the end of grade 9, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 9–10 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.
By the Waters of Babylon

Stephen Vincent Benét

BACKGROUND

Stephen Vincent Benét published this story in 1937, just after the devastating bombing of Guernica in Spain, in which hundreds of defenseless civilians were killed. During this time, people were afraid of the increasingly destructive power of modern weaponry. A few short years after this story was published, World War II would erupt, and the nuclear bomb would be invented. The title of the story is an allusion, or reference, to a line from Psalm 137, which describes the yearning of the Jews for their homeland after they were exiled by the Babylonians.

The north and the west and the south are good hunting ground, but it is forbidden to go east. It is forbidden to go to any of the Dead Places except to search for metal, and then he who touches the metal must be a priest or the son of a priest. Afterwards, both the man and the metal must be purified! These are the rules and the laws: they are well made. It is forbidden to cross the great river and look upon the place that was the Place of the Gods—this is most strictly forbidden. We do not even say its name though we know its name. It is there that spirits live, and demons—it is there that there are the ashes of the Great Burning. These things are forbidden—they have been forbidden since the beginning of time.

My father is a priest; I am the son of a priest. I have been in the Dead Places near us, with my father—at first, I was afraid. When my father went into the house to search for the metal, I stood by the door and my heart felt small and weak. It was a dead man’s house, a spirit house. It did not have the smell of man, though there were old bones in a corner. But it is not fitting that a priest’s son should show fear. I looked at the bones in the shadow and kept my voice still.

NOTES

purified (PYUR uh fyd) v. cleaned by removing harmful or unwanted materials or qualities

CLOSE READ
ANNOTATE: In paragraph 1, mark a key word that the narrator repeats.

QUESTION: What emotional quality or tone does this repetition create?

CONCLUDE: What does this repeated word suggest about the narrator and his society?
Then my father came out with the metal—a good, strong piece. He looked at me with both eyes but I had not run away. He gave me the metal to hold—I took it and did not die. So he knew that I was truly his son and would be a priest in my time. That was when I was very young—nevertheless, my brothers would not have done it, though they are good hunters. After that, they gave me the good piece of meat and the warm corner by the fire. My father watched over me—he was glad that I should be a priest. But when I boasted or wept without a reason, he punished me more strictly than my brothers. That was right.

After a time, I myself was allowed to go into the dead houses and search for metal. So I learned the ways of those houses—and if I saw bones, I was no longer afraid. The bones are light and old—sometimes they will fall into dust if you touch them. But that is a great sin.

I was taught the chants and the spells—I was taught how to stop the running of blood from a wound and many secrets. A priest must know many secrets—that was what my father said. If the hunters think we do all things by chants and spells, they may believe so—it does not hurt them. I was taught how to read in the old books and how to make the old writings—that was hard and took a long time. My knowledge made me happy—it was like a fire in my heart. Most of all, I liked to hear of the Old Days and the stories of the gods. I asked myself many questions that I could not answer, but it was good to ask them. At night, I would lie awake and listen to the wind—it seemed to me that it was the voice of the gods as they flew through the air.

We are not ignorant like the Forest People—our women spin wool on the wheel, our priests wear a white robe. We do not eat grubs from the tree, we have not forgotten the old writings, although they are hard to understand. Nevertheless, my knowledge and my lack of knowledge burned in me—I wished to know more. When I was a man at last, I came to my father and said, “It is time for me to go on my journey. Give me your leave.”

He looked at me for a long time, stroking his beard, then he said at last, “Yes. It is time.” That night, in the house of the priesthood, I asked for and received purification. My body hurt but my spirit was a cool stone. It was my father himself who questioned me about my dreams. He bade me look into the smoke of the fire and see—I saw and told what I saw. It was what I have always seen—a river, and, beyond it, a great Dead Place and in it the gods walking. I have always thought about that. His eyes were stern when I told him—he was no longer my father but a priest. He said, “This is a strong dream.”

“It is mine,” I said, while the smoke waved and my head felt light. They were singing the Star song in the outer chamber and it was like the buzzing of bees in my head.

He asked me how the gods were dressed and I told him how they were dressed. We know how they were dressed from the book, but
I saw them as if they were before me. When I had finished, he threw the sticks three times and studied them as they fell.

“This is a very strong dream,” he said. “It may eat you up.”

“I am not afraid,” I said and looked at him with both eyes.

My voice sounded thin in my ears but that was because of the smoke.

He touched me on the breast and the forehead. He gave me the bow and the three arrows.

“Take them,” he said. “It is forbidden to travel east. It is forbidden to cross the river. It is forbidden to go to the Place of the Gods. All these things are forbidden.”

“All these things are forbidden,” I said, but it was my voice that spoke and not my spirit. He looked at me again.

“My son,” he said. “Once I had young dreams. If your dreams do not eat you up, you may be a great priest. If they eat you, you are still my son. Now go on your journey.”

I went fasting, as is the law. My body hurt, but not my heart. When the dawn came, I was out of sight of the village. I prayed and purified myself, waiting for a sign. That sign was an eagle. It flew east.

Sometimes signs are sent by bad spirits. I waited again on the flat rock, fasting, taking no food. I was very still—I could feel the sky above me and the earth beneath. I waited till the sun was beginning to sink. Then three deer passed in the valley, going east—they did not mind me or see me. There was a white fawn with them—a very great sign.

I followed them, at a distance, waiting for what would happen. My heart was troubled about going east, yet I knew that I must go. My head hummed with my fasting—I did not even see the panther spring upon the white fawn. But, before I knew it, the bow was in my hand. I shouted and the panther lifted his head from the fawn. It is not easy to kill a panther with one arrow but the arrow went through his eye and into his brain. He died as he tried to spring—he rolled over, tearing at the ground. Then I knew I was meant to go east—I knew that was my journey. When the night came, I made my fire and roasted meat.

It is eight suns’ journey to the east and a man passes by many Dead Places. The Forest People are afraid of them but I am not. Once I made my fire on the edge of a Dead Place at night and, next morning, in the dead house, I found a good knife, little rusted. That was small to what came afterward, but it made my heart feel big. Always when I looked for game, it was in front of my arrow, and twice I passed hunting parties of the Forest People without their knowing. So I knew my magic was strong and my journey clean, in spite of the law.

Toward the setting of the eighth sun, I came to the banks of the great river. It was half-a-day’s journey after I had left the god-road—we do not use the god-roads now for they are falling apart into great blocks of stone, and the forest is safer going. A long way off, I had seen the water through trees but the trees were thick. At last, I came out upon an open place at the top of a cliff. There was the
great river below, like a giant in the sun. It is very long, very wide. It could eat all the streams we know and still be thirsty. Its name is Ou-dis-sun, the Sacred, the Long. No man of my tribe had seen it, not even my father, the priest. It was magic and I prayed.

Then I raised my eyes and looked south. It was there, the Place of the Gods.

How can I tell you what it was like—you do not know. It was there, in the red light, and they were too big to be houses. It was there with the red light upon it, mighty and ruined. I knew that in another moment the gods would see me. I covered my eyes with my hands and crept back into the forest.

Surely, that was enough to do, and live. Surely it was enough to spend the night upon the cliff. The Forest People themselves do not come near. Yet, all through the night, I knew that I should have to cross the river and walk in the places of the gods, although the gods ate me up. My magic did not help me at all and yet there was a fire in my bowels, a fire in my mind. When the sun rose I thought, “My journey has been clean. Now I will go home from my journey.” But, even as I thought so, I knew I could not. If I went to the place of the gods, I would surely die, but, if I did not go, I could never be at peace with my spirit again. It is better to lose one’s life than one’s spirit, if one is a priest and the son of a priest.

Nevertheless, as I made the raft, the tears ran out of my eyes. The Forest People could have killed me without a fight, if they had come upon me then, but they did not come. When the raft was made, I said the sayings for the dead and painted myself for death. My heart was cold as a frog and my knees like water, but the burning in my mind would not let me have peace. As I pushed the raft from the shore, I began my death song—I had the right. It was a fine song.

“I am John, son of John,” I sang. “My people are the Hill People. They are the men. I go into the Dead Places but I am not slain. I take the metal from the Dead Places but I am not blasted. I travel upon the god-roads and am not afraid. E-yah! I have killed the panther. I have killed the fawn! E-yah! I have come to the great river. No man has come there before. It is forbidden to go east, but I have gone, forbidden to go on the great river, but I am there. Open your hearts, you spirits, and hear my song. Now I go to the Place of the Gods. I shall not return. My body is painted for death and my limbs weak, but my heart is big as I go to the Place of the Gods!”

All the same, when I came to the Place of the Gods. I was afraid, afraid. The current of the great river is very strong—it gripped my
raft with its hands. That was magic, for the river itself is wide and calm. I could feel evil spirits about me, in the bright morning: I could feel their breath on my neck as I was swept down the stream. Never have I been so much alone—I tried to think of my knowledge, but it was a squirrel’s heap of winter nuts. There was no strength in my knowledge any more, and I felt small and naked as a new-hatched bird—alone upon the great river, the servant of the gods.

Yet, after a while, my eyes were opened and I saw both banks of the river—I saw that once there had been god-roads across it, though now they were broken and fallen like broken vines. Very great they were, and wonderful and broken—broken in the time of the Great Burning when the fire fell out of the sky. And always the current took me nearer to the Place of the Gods, and the huge ruins rose before my eyes.

I do not know the customs of rivers—we are the People of the Hills. I tried to guide my raft with the pole but it spun around, I thought the river meant to take me past the Place of the Gods and out into the Bitter Water of the legends. I grew angry then—my heart felt strong. I said aloud, “I am a priest and the son of a priest!” The gods heard me—they showed me how to paddle with the pole on one side of the raft. The current changed itself—I drew near to the Place of the Gods.

When I was very near, my raft struck and turned over. I can swim in our lakes—I swam to the shore. There was a great spike or rusted metal sticking out into the river—I hauled myself up upon it and sat there, panting. I had saved my bow and two arrows and the knife I found in the Dead Place but that was all. My raft went whirling downstream toward the Bitter Water. I looked after it, and thought if it had trod me under, at least I would be safely dead. Nevertheless, when I had dried my bow-string and restrung it, I walked forward to the Place of the Gods.

It felt like ground underfoot; it did not burn me. It is not true what some of the tales say, that the ground there burns forever, for I have been there. Here and there were the marks and stains of the Great Burning, on the ruins, that is true. But they were old marks and old stains. It is not true either, what some of our priests say, that it is an island covered with fogs and enchantments. It is not. It is a great Dead Place—greater than any Dead Place we know. Everywhere in it there are god-roads, though most are cracked and broken. Everywhere there are the ruins of the high towers of the gods.

How shall I tell what I saw? I went carefully, my strung bow in my hand, my skin ready for danger. There should have been the wailings of spirits and the shrieks of demons, but there were not. It was very silent and sunny where I had landed—the wind and the rain and the birds that drop seeds had done their work—the grass grew in the cracks of the broken stone. It is a fair island—no wonder the gods built there. If I had come there, a god, I also would have built.
How shall I tell what I saw? The towers are not all broken—here and there one still stands, like a great tree in a forest, and the birds nest high. But the towers themselves look blind, for the gods are gone. I saw a fish-hawk, catching fish in the river. I saw a little dance of white butterflies over a great heap of broken stones and columns. I went there and looked about me—there was a carved stone with cut-letters, broken in half. I can read letters but I could not understand these. They said UBTREAS. There was also the shattered image of a man or a god. It had been made of white stone and he wore his hair tied back like a woman’s. His name was ASHING, as I read on the cracked half of a stone. I thought it wise to pray to ASHING, though I do not know that god.

How shall I tell what I saw? There was no smell of man left, on stone or metal. Nor were there many trees in that wilderness of stone. There are many pigeons, nesting and dropping in the towers—the gods must have loved them, or, perhaps, they used them for sacrifices. There are wild cats that roam the god-roads, green-eyed, unafraid of man. At night they wail like demons, but they are not demons. The wild dogs are more dangerous, for they hunt in a pack, but them I did not meet till later. Everywhere there are the carved stones carved with magical numbers or words.

I went North—I did not try to hide myself. When a god or a demon saw me, then I would die, but meanwhile I was no longer afraid. My hunger for knowledge burned in me—there was so much that I could not understand. After a while, I knew that my belly was hungry. I could have hunted for my meat, but I did not hunt. It is known that the gods did not hunt as we do—they got their food from enchanted boxes and jars. Sometimes these are still found in the Dead Places—once, when I was a child and foolish, I opened such a jar and tasted it and found the food sweet. But my father found out and punished me for it strictly, for, often, that food is death. Now, though, I had long gone past what was forbidden, and I entered the likeliest towers, looking for the food of the gods.

I found it at last in the ruins of a great temple in the mid-city. A mighty temple it must have been, for the roof was painted like the sky at night with its stars—that much I could see, though the colors were faint and dim. It went down into great caves and tunnels—perhaps they kept their slaves there. But when I started to climb down, I heard the squeaking of rats, so I did not go—rats are unclean, and there must have been many tribes of them, from the squeaking. But near there, I found food, in the heart of a ruin, behind a door that still opened. I ate only the fruits from the jar—they had a very sweet taste. There was drink, too, in bottles of glass— the drink of the gods was strong and made my head swim. After I had eaten and drunk, I slept on the top of a stone, my bow at my side.

When I woke, the sun was low. Looking down from where I lay, I saw a dog sitting on his haunches. His tongue was hanging out of his mouth; he looked as if he were laughing. He was a big dog,
with a gray-brown coat, as big as a wolf. I sprang up and shouted at him but he did not move—he just sat there as if he were laughing. I did not like that. When I reached for a stone to throw, he moved swiftly out of the way of the stone. He was not afraid of me; he looked at me as if I were meat. No doubt I could have killed him with an arrow, but I did not know if there were others. Moreover, night was falling.

I looked about me—not far away there was a great broken god-road, leading North. The towers were high enough, but not so high, and while many of the dead-houses were wrecked, there were some that stood. I went toward this god-road, keeping to the heights of the ruins, while the dog followed. When I had reached the god-road. I saw that there were others behind him. If I had slept later, they would have come upon me asleep and torn out my throat. As it was, they were sure enough of me; they did not hurry. When I went into the dead-house, they kept watch at the entrance—doubtless they thought they would have a fine hunt. But a dog cannot open a door and I knew from the books, that the gods did not like to live on the ground but on high.

I had just found a door I could open when the dogs decided to rush. Ha! They were surprised when I shut the door in their faces—it was a good door, of strong metal. I could hear their foolish baying beyond it, but I did not stop to answer them. I was in darkness—I found stairs and climbed. There were many stairs, turning around till my head was dizzy. At the top was another door—I found the knob and opened it. I was in a long small chamber—on one side of it was a bronze door that could not be opened, for it had no handle. Perhaps there was a magic word to open it, but I did not have the word. I turned to the door in the opposite side of the wall. The lock of it was broken and I opened it and went in.
Within, there was a place of great riches. The god who lived there must have been a powerful god. The first room was a small anteroom—I waited there for some time, telling the spirits of the place that I came in peace and not as a robber. When it seemed to me that they had had time to hear me, I went on. Ah, what riches! Few, even, of the windows had been broken—it was all as it had been. The great windows that looked over the city had not been broken at all though they were dusty and streaked with many years. There were coverings on the floors, the colors not greatly faded, and the chairs were soft, and deep. There were pictures upon the walls, very strange, very wonderful—I remember one of a bunch of flowers in a jar—if you came close to it, you could see nothing but bits of color, but if you stood away from it, the flowers might have been picked yesterday. It made my heart feel strange to look at this picture—and to look at the figure of a bird, in some hard clay, on a table and see it so like our birds.

Everywhere there were books and writings, many in tongues that I could not read. The god who lived there must have been a wise god and full of knowledge. I felt I had right there, as I sought knowledge also. Nevertheless, it was strange. There was a washing-place but no water—perhaps the gods washed in air. There was a cooking-place but no wood, and though there was a machine to cook food, there was no place to put fire in it. Nor were there candles or lamps—there were things that looked like lamps but they had neither oil nor wick. All these things were magic, but I touched them and lived—the magic had gone out of them. Let me tell one thing to show. In the washing-place, a thing said “Hot” but it was not hot to the touch—an other thing said “Cold” but it was not cold. This must have been a strong magic but the magic was gone. I do not understand—they had ways—I wish that I knew.

It was close and dry and dusty in their house of the gods. I have said the magic was gone but that is not true—it had gone from the magic things but it had not gone from the place. I felt the spirits about me, weighing upon me. Nor had I ever slept in a Dead Place before—and yet, tonight, I must sleep there. When I thought of it, my tongue felt dry in my throat, in spite of my wish for knowledge. Almost I would have gone down again and faced the dogs, but I did not.

I had not gone through all the rooms when the darkness fell. When it fell, I went back to the big room looking over the city and made fire. There was a place to make fire and a box with wood in it, though I do not think they cooked there. I wrapped myself in a floorcovering and slept in front of the fire—I was very tired.

Now I tell what is very strong magic. I woke in the midst of the night. When I woke, the fire had gone out and I was cold. It seemed to me that all around me there were whisperings and voices. I closed my eyes to shut them out. Some will say that I slept again, but I do not think that I slept. I could feel the spirits drawing my spirit out of my body as a fish is drawn on a line.
Why should I lie about it? I am a priest and the son of a priest. If there are spirits, as they say, in the small Dead Places near us, what spirits must there not be in that great Place of the Gods? And would not they wish to speak? After such long years? I know that I felt myself drawn as a fish is drawn on a line. I had stepped out of my body—I could see my body asleep in front of the cold fire, but it was not I. I was drawn to look out upon the city of the gods.

It should have been dark, for it was night, but it was not dark. Everywhere there were lights—lines of lights—circles and blurs of light—ten thousand torches would not have been the same. The sky itself was alight—you could barely see the stars for the glow in the sky. I thought to myself “This is strong magic” and trembled. There was a roaring in my ears like the rushing of rivers. Then my eyes grew used to the light and my ears to the sound. I knew that I was seeing the city as it had been when the gods were alive.

That was a sight indeed—yes, that was a sight: I could not have seen it in the body—my body would have died. Everywhere went the gods, on foot and in chariots—there were gods beyond number and counting, and their chariots blocked the streets. They had turned night to day for their pleasure—they did not sleep with the sun. The noise of their coming and going was the noise of many waters. It was magic what they could do—it was magic what they did.

I looked out of another window—the great vines of their bridges were mended and the god-roads went East and West. Restless, restless, were the gods and always in motion! They burrowed tunnels under rivers—they flew in the air. With unbelievable tools they did giant works—no part of the earth was safe from them, for, if they wished for a thing, they summoned it from the other side of the world. And always, as they labored and rested, as they feasted and made love, there was a drum in their ears—the pulse of the giant city, beating and beating like a man's heart.

Were they happy? What is happiness to the gods? They were great, they were mighty, they were wonderful and terrible. As I looked upon them and their magic, I felt like a child—but a little more, it seemed to me, and they would pull down the moon from the sky. I saw them with wisdom beyond wisdom and knowledge beyond knowledge. And yet not all they did was well done—even I could see that—and yet their wisdom could not but grow until all was peace.

Then I saw their fate come upon them and that was terrible past speech. It came upon them as they walked the streets of their city. I have been in the fights with the Forest People—I have seen men die. But this was not like that. When gods war with gods, they use weapons we do not know. It was fire falling out of the sky and a mist that poisoned. It was the time of the Great Burning and the Destruction. They ran about like ants in the streets of their city—poor gods, poor gods! Then the towers began to fall. A few escaped—yes, a few. The legends tell it. But, even after the city had become a Dead Place, for

summoned (SUHM uhnrd) v. ordered someone or something to come to a place
many years the poison was still in the ground. I saw it happen, I saw the last of them die. It was darkness over the broken city, and I wept.

All this, I saw. I saw it as I have told it, though not in the body. When I woke in the morning. I was hungry, but I did not think first of my hunger, for my heart was perplexed and confused. I know the reason for the Dead Places but I did not see why it had happened. It seemed to me it should not have happened, with all the magic they had. I went through the house looking for an answer. There was so much in the house I could not understand—and yet I am a priest and the son of a priest. It was like being on one side of the great river, at night, with no light to show the way.

Then I saw the dead god. He was sitting in his chair, by the window, in a room I had not entered before and, for the first moment, I thought that he was alive. Then I saw the skin on the back of his hand—it was like dry leather. The room was shut, hot and dry—no doubt that had kept him as he was. At first I was afraid to approach him—then the fear left me. He was sitting looking out over the city—he was dressed in the clothes of the gods. His age was neither young nor old—I could not tell his age. But there was wisdom in his face and great sadness. You could see that he would have not run away. He had sat at his window, watching his city die—then he himself had died. But it is better to lose one’s life than one’s spirit—and you could see from the face that his spirit had not been lost. I knew that if I touched him, he would fall into dust—and yet, there was something unconquered in the face.

That is all of my story, for then I knew he was a man—I knew then that they had been men, neither gods nor demons. It is a great knowledge, hard to tell and believe. They were men—they went a dark road, but they were men. I had no fear after that—I had no fear going home, though twice I fought off the dogs and once I was hunted for two days by the Forest People. When I saw my father again, I prayed and was purified. He touched my lips and my breast, he said, “You went a boy. You come back a man and a priest.” I said, “Father, they were men! I have been to the Place of the Gods and seen it! Now slay me, if it is the law—but still I know they were men.”

He looked at me out of both eyes. He said, “The law is not always the same shape—you have done what you have done. I could not have done it in my time but you come after me. Tell!”

I told and he listened. After that, I wished to tell all the people but he showed me otherwise. He said, “Truth is a hard deer to hunt. If you eat too much truth at once, you may die of the truth. It was not idly that our fathers forbade the Dead Places.” He was right—it is better the truth should come little by little. I have learned that, being a priest. Perhaps, in the old days, they ate knowledge too fast.

Nevertheless, we make a beginning. It is not for the metal alone we go to the Dead Places now—there are the books and the writings. They are hard to learn. And the magic tools are broken—but we can look at them and wonder. At least, we make a beginning. And, when
I am chief priest we shall go beyond the great river. We shall go to the
Place of the Gods—the place newyork—not one man but a company.
We shall look for the images of the gods and find the god ASHING
and the others—the gods Lincoln and Biltmore\(^1\) and Moses.\(^2\) But they
were men who built the city, not gods or demons. They were men.
I remember the dead man’s face. They were men who were here
before us. We must build again. \(^\star\)

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1. **Biltmore** hotel in New York City.
2. **Moses** Robert Moses (1888–1981), former New York City municipal official who oversaw
   many large construction projects.

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**Comprehension Check**

Complete the following items after you finish your first read.

1. After what type of event is this story set?

2. What sets the narrator and his father apart from the people surrounding them?

3. How does the narrator arrive at his insight about who the gods of the Dead Places were?

4. What advice about sharing knowledge does John’s father give him at the end of the story?

5. **Notebook** To confirm your understanding, write a summary of the story.

**RESEARCH**

**Research to Clarify** Choose at least one unfamiliar detail from the text. Briefly research that
detail. In what way does the information you learned shed light on an aspect of the story?

**Research to Explore** Benét wrote this story in response to the bombing of the Basque
town of Guernica on April 25, 1937, during the Spanish Civil War. Conduct research to find
out more about this event and consider how it influenced Benét’s story. Share your findings
and conclusions with the class.
Close Read the Text

1. This model, from paragraph 1 of the text, shows two sample annotations, along with questions and conclusions. Close read the passage, and find another detail to annotate. Then, write a question and your conclusion.

   ANNOTATE: These words are repeated.
   QUESTION: What effect does the repetition create?
   CONCLUDE: The repetition gives the text a formal, solemn, and religious tone.

   It is there that spirits live, and demons—it is there that there are the ashes of the Great Burning. These things are forbidden—they have been forbidden since the beginning of time.

   ANNOTATE: These words are capitalized.
   QUESTION: What does the capitalization tell a reader?
   CONCLUDE: The capitalization shows that this event has become one of historical significance for the narrator's people.

2. For more practice, go back into the text, and complete the close-read notes.

3. Revisit a section of the text you found important during your first read. Read this section closely, and annotate what you notice. Ask yourself questions such as “Why did the author make this choice?” What can you conclude?

Analyze the Text

1. (a) In paragraph 6, what word does John, one of the Hill People, use to describe the Forest People? (b) Make Inferences. What does this suggest about how the Hill People view the Forest People?

2. (a) What does John compare his knowledge to in paragraph 26? (b) Interpret. How does this metaphor help you understand how John feels at this point in the story?

3. (a) Summarize. In paragraph 51, what does John observe about the “dead god”? (b) Analyze. Why do these observations free John from fear?

4. (a) What phrase does John repeat in the beginning of paragraph 52? (b) Interpret. What does this repetition suggest about his realizations in that particular moment? Explain.

5. Essential Question: Why do we try to imagine the future? What have you learned about world’s end literature from reading this story?
Analyze Craft and Structure

**Author’s Choices: Narrative Elements** Fiction writers choose a specific narrative point of view, or vantage point, from which to tell a story. In “By the Waters of Babylon,” Stephen Vincent Benét uses a first-person narrator, John, who is a character in the story and speaks in the first person, using the pronoun I.

Benét’s use of the first-person point of view in this story contributes to the development of dramatic irony, a device that involves a contrast between what a character thinks to be true and what the reader knows to be true. In this story, readers can see the meaning in certain details, such as the name of the river John crosses, but John himself cannot. The first-person point of view allows the reader to connect textual clues to build an understanding of events that John only realizes later.

**Practice**

**Notebook** Respond to these questions.

1. (a) Reread paragraphs 1 and 2. How does the author introduce the narrative point of view? (b) How might the narrative be different if told by a third-person narrator who is not a character in the story?

2. Record in the chart examples of dramatic irony by comparing John’s beliefs with the reader’s understanding.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT JOHN BELIEVES</th>
<th>WHAT THE READER KNOWS</th>
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3. At what point in the story does John’s understanding catch up to the reader’s? Explain.

4. (a) How does the use of dramatic irony in this story suggest the loss of knowledge that may occur when a civilization fails? (b) What does this irony suggest about our own understanding of past civilizations?
Concept Vocabulary

Why These Words? These concept words all help to describe the elaborate ceremonies and rituals that John’s people have created. For example, in the opening paragraph, the narrator explains that metal gathered from the Dead Places must be *purified*, or cleansed. Later, John mentions that he “asked for and received purification” before his solo journey. The idea of purification has religious connotations, emphasizing the removal of unclean or impure thoughts, as well as physical poisons.

1. How does the concept vocabulary help readers understand John’s culture?

2. What other words in the selection connect to this concept?

Practice

1. Demonstrate your understanding of the concept words’ meanings by using each word in a sentence to answer these questions.
   - How might you tell whether or not a material has been *purified*?
   - If you *bade* another person to take action to resolve a problem, what is it that you did?
   - How might a *stern* teacher act toward students?
   - How might you feel after *fasting* for 24 hours?
   - What are two *customs* that reflect your cultural heritage?
   - If you *summoned* your dog, what would you expect the animal to do?

2. Create fill-in-the-blank puzzles for others to solve. First, write a sentence that demonstrates the meaning of each concept word. Then, rewrite each sentence, but replace the concept word with a blank. Challenge your classmates to fill in the missing words.

Word Study

**Word Families** A *word family* is a group of words that share the same origin or that were all formed from a common base word. For instance, the words *purified* and *purification*, which appear in “By the Waters of Babylon,” are part of the same word family as the word *pure*.

1. Identify two other words that belong to the same word family as *purified*, *purification*, and *pure*.

2. Identify two words that belong to the same word family as *customs*. 
Author’s Style

Character Development  Benét uses a variety of elements to develop the character of John, the narrator of “By the Waters of Babylon.” The author’s choices help readers understand both John’s personality and the culture that helped form it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ELEMENT</th>
<th>EXAMPLE</th>
<th>ANALYSIS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Punctuation:</td>
<td>These things are forbidden—they have been forbidden since the beginning of time. (paragraph 1)</td>
<td>The use of a dash (—) emphasizes the connection between ideas and creates the feeling that John is truly speaking the story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diction:</td>
<td>It did not have the smell of man, though there were old bones in a corner. But it is not fitting that a priest’s son should show fear. (paragraph 2)</td>
<td>John’s vocabulary is relatively limited. He uses formal diction characterized by an absence of contractions, which suggests that John is unfamiliar with colloquial language. It might also suggest that he is concerned with presenting himself correctly and does not use language carelessly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syntax:</td>
<td>He gave me the metal to hold—I took it and did not die. (paragraph 3)</td>
<td>John speaks in simple sentences that reflect his formality and might suggest a lack of familiarity or comfort with informal language.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Read It

1. Mark the punctuation in this excerpt from paragraph 5 of “By the Waters of Babylon.” How does the author use this punctuation to develop John’s character?

   I was taught the chants and the spells—I was taught how to stop the running of blood from a wound and many secrets. A priest must know many secrets—that was what my father said. If the hunters think we do all things by chants and spells, they may believe so—it does not hurt them.

2. Read John’s “death song” in paragraph 26 aloud. Listen carefully to John’s diction and syntax. Explain how the diction and syntax in his “fine song” help you understand and appreciate both John’s character and his culture.

Write It

Notebook  Revise the punctuation, diction, and syntax in this paragraph to make it sound more like John’s narration in “By the Waters of Babylon.”

Everyone’s always telling me I need to follow the rules, but I know better. I’m sure that I was totally right to travel east, even though everybody says you shouldn’t go there. It was definitely worth it even though I can’t share what I learned now that I’m back home. The others can’t handle the truth right now, but maybe someday they’ll be ready.
EFFECTIVE EXPRESSION

Writing to Sources

A great story ends with a satisfying conclusion that resolves the main conflicts. However, some narratives leave questions open for readers to interpret. Writing a sequel can help readers imagine the events that take place after a story is over.

Assignment

Write a sequel that begins after the last sentence of “By the Waters of Babylon.” Consider these questions as you plan your writing:

- What happens when John rejoins his people?
- What truths does he begin to share with them, and how does he do so?
- What does John’s community do with this new knowledge? How do they change their culture and start to rebuild?
- How might John’s people avoid repeating the errors of the past?

Your sequel should include:

- A clear narrative with a beginning, a middle, and an end
- Realistic dialogue that reflects characters’ personalities
- Detailed descriptions of characters, settings, and events
- Pacing that speeds up or slows down the action

Vocabulary and Style Connection

Include several of the concept vocabulary words in your sequel to show how rituals changed for John’s people after the end of the story. Develop characters through careful choices in diction, syntax, and punctuation.

- purified
- stern
- customs
- bade
- fasting
- summoned

Reflect on Your Writing

After you have written your sequel, answer these questions.

1. How did writing a sequel help you understand and appreciate the events of the original story?

2. What details from the original story helped you create an effective sequel?

3. Why These Words? The words you choose make a difference in your writing. Which words did you use to achieve a specific effect in your sequel?
Speaking and Listening

Assignment
Create and present a multimedia timeline of the story that includes information about events that took place before the beginning of John’s narration. Include images, videos, audio, or other media elements in your timeline to enhance your audience’s understanding of the events. First, reread the selection. Then, follow these steps to complete the assignment.

1. Identify and Order Events First, list the key story events. Then, look for clues in the story that tell what happened in the past and how those events affected the society in which John lives during the time of the story. List these “prequel” events. Finally, order the events chronologically.

2. Write Timeline Labels After you identify and order events, write concise timeline labels to describe them. Most events should be described in one sentence. Consider how to shorten long labels without losing crucial details.

3. Select Appropriate Media Review each timeline event, and consider which type of media element would best support it. Remember, you will be presenting your entire timeline, so make sure that individual media elements are relatively short.

4. Prepare Your Delivery Practice presenting your completed timeline. Consider how to pace your presentation. Develop a planning script that shows how much time you will spend discussing each event. Remember to include the time needed to screen videos or play audio recordings.

5. Evaluate Timelines As your classmates share their timelines, listen attentively. Use the evaluation guide to analyze their timelines.

EVALUATION GUIDE
Rate each statement on a scale of 1 (not demonstrated) to 4 (demonstrated).

☐ The timeline includes, in chronological order, key events from before and during the action of the story.

☐ Events are described briefly and clearly.

☐ Media elements effectively support the timeline.

☐ The presenter used time wisely and fully explained each event.

Evidence Log
Before moving on to a new selection, go to your Evidence Log and record what you learned from “By the Waters of Babylon.”
About the Author

Ray Bradbury (1920–2012) developed a fascination with horror movies and futuristic fantasies. As a teenager, he decided to become a writer and to use fiction to “live forever.” He published his first novel, The Martian Chronicles, in 1950, and his novel Fahrenheit 451 became an instant bestseller when it was published in 1953. In 2007, Bradbury won a special Pulitzer Prize for his “distinguished, prolific, and deeply influential career as an unmatched author of science fiction and fantasy.”

There Will Come Soft Rains

Concept Vocabulary

You will encounter the following words as you read “There Will Come Soft Rains.” Before reading, note how familiar you are with each word. Then, rank the words in order from most familiar (1) to least familiar (6).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WORD</th>
<th>YOUR RANKING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>chimed</td>
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<tr>
<td>attending</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>delicately</td>
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<tr>
<td>fluttered</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>manipulated</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>tremulous</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After completing the first read, come back to the concept vocabulary and review your rankings. Mark changes to your original rankings as needed.

First Read FICTION

Apply these strategies as you conduct your first read. You will have an opportunity to complete the close-read notes after your first read.

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**STANDARDS**

Reading Literature
By the end of grade 9, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 9–10 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.
BACKGROUND
This story was written in 1950 during a period known as the Cold War, a mostly non-military conflict that occurred between the United States and the Soviet Union. Each side became increasingly focused on developing more nuclear weapons to discourage the other side from using its own bombs. This, coupled with the fact that the United States had dropped two atomic bombs on Japan during World War II, created a widespread fear of nuclear war.

In the living room the voice-clock sang, *Tick-tock, seven o’clock, time to get up, time to get up, seven o’clock!* as if it were afraid nobody would. The morning house lay empty. The clock ticked on, repeating and repeating its sounds into the emptiness. *Seven-nine, breakfast time, seven-nine!*

In the kitchen the breakfast stove gave a hissing sigh and ejected from its warm interior eight pieces of perfectly browned toast, eight eggs sunnyside up, sixteen slices of bacon, two coffees, and two cool glasses of milk.

“Today is August 4, 2026,” said a second voice from the kitchen ceiling, “in the city of Allendale, California.” It repeated the date three times for memory’s sake. “Today is Mr. Featherstone’s birthday.
Today is the anniversary of Tilita’s marriage. Insurance is payable, as are the water, gas, and light bills."

4 Somewhere in the walls, relays clicked, memory tapes glided under electric eyes.

5 *Eight-one, tick-tock, eight-one o’clock, off to school, off to work, run, run, eight-one!* But no doors slammed, no carpets took the soft tread of rubber heels. It was raining outside. The weather box on the front door sang quietly: “Rain, rain, go away; rubbers, raincoats for today . . .” And the rain tapped on the empty house, echoing.

6 Outside, the garage chimed and lifted its door to reveal the waiting car. After a long wait the door swung down again.

7 At eight-thirty the eggs were shriveled and the toast was like stone. An aluminum wedge scraped them into the sink, where hot water whiled them down a metal throat which digested and flushed them away to the distant sea. The dirty dishes were dropped into a hot washer and emerged twinkling dry.

8 *Nine-fifteen, sang the clock, time to clean.*

9 Out of warrens in the wall, tiny robot mice darted. The rooms were acrawl with the small cleaning animals, all rubber and metal. They thudded against chairs, whirling their mustached runners, kneading the rug nap, sucking gently at hidden dust. Then, like mysterious invaders, they popped into their burrows. Their pink electric eye faded. The house was clean.

10 *Ten o’clock.* The sun came out from behind the rain. The house stood alone in a city of rubble and ashes. This was the one house left standing. At night the ruined city gave off a radioactive glow which could be seen for miles.

11 *Ten-fifteen.* The garden sprinklers whirled up in golden founts, filling the soft morning air with scatterings of brightness. The water pelted windowpanes, running down the charred west side where the house had been burned evenly free of its white paint. The entire west face of the house was black, save for five places. Here the silhouette in paint of a man mowing a lawn. Here, as in a photograph, a woman bent to pick flowers. Still farther over, their images burned on wood in one titanic instant, a small boy, hands flung into the air; higher up, the image of a thrown ball, and opposite him a girl, hand raised to catch a ball which never came down.

12 The five spots of paint—the man, the woman, the children, the ball—remained. The rest was a thin charcoaled layer.

13 The gentle sprinkler rain filled the garden with falling light.

14 Until this day, how well the house had kept its peace. How carefully it had inquired, “Who goes there? What’s the password?” and, getting no answer from the lonely foxes and whining cats, it had shut up its windows and drawn shades in an old-maidenly preoccupation with self-protection which bordered on a mechanical paranoia.

1. *silhouette* (sihluh WEHT) *n.* outline of a figure, filled in with a solid color.
It quivered at each sound, the house did. If a sparrow brushed a window, the shade snapped up. The bird, startled, flew off! No, not even a bird must touch the house!

The house was an altar with ten thousand attendants, big, small, servicing, attending, in choirs. But the gods had gone away, and the ritual of the religion continued senselessly, uselessly.

Twelve noon.

A dog whined, shivering, on the front porch.

The front door recognized the dog voice and opened. The dog, once huge and fleshy, but now gone to bone and covered with sores, moved in and through the house, tracking mud. Behind it whirred angry mice, angry at having to pick up mud, angry at inconvenience.

For not a leaf fragment blew under the door but what the wall panels flipped open and the copper scrap rats flashed swiftly out. The offending dust, hair, or paper, seized in miniature steel jaws, was raced back to the burrows. There, down tubes which fed into the cellar, it was dropped into the sighing vent of an incinerator which sat like evil Baal in a dark corner.

The dog ran upstairs, hysterically yelping to each door, at last realizing, as the house realized, that only silence was here.

It sniffed the air and scratched the kitchen door. Behind the door, the stove was making pancakes which filled the house with a rich baked odor and the scent of maple syrup.

The dog frothed at the mouth, lying at the door, sniffing, its eyes turned to fire. It ran wildly in circles, biting at its tail, spun in a frenzy, and died. It lay in the parlor for an hour.

Two o'clock, sang a voice.

Delicately sensing decay at last, the regiments of mice hummed out as softly as blown gray leaves in an electrical wind.

Two-fifteen.

The dog was gone.

In the cellar, the incinerator glowed suddenly and a whirl of sparks leaped up the chimney.

Two thirty-five.


But the tables were silent and the cards untouched.

At four o’clock the tables folded like great butterflies back through the paneled walls.

Four-thirty.

The nursery walls glowed.

Animals took shape: yellow giraffes, blue lions, pink antelopes, lilac panthers cavorting in crystal substance. The walls were glass. They looked out upon color and fantasy. Hidden films clocked though the well-oiled sprockets, and the walls lived. The nursery

floor was woven to resemble a crisp cereal meadow. Over this ran aluminum roaches and iron crickets, and in the hot still air butterflies of delicate red tissue wavered among the sharp aroma of animal spoors!

There was the sound like a great matted yellow hive of bees within a dark bellows, the lazy bumble of a purring lion. And there was the patter of okapi feet and the murmur of a fresh jungle rain, like other hoofs falling upon the summer-starched grass. Now the walls dissolved into distances of parched weed, mile on mile, and warm endless sky. The animals drew away into thorn brakes and water holes.

It was the children’s hour. Five o’clock. The bath filled with clear hot water.

Six, seven, eight o’clock. The dinner dishes manipulated like magic tricks, and in the study a click. In the metal stand opposite the hearth a fire now blazed up warmly.

Nine o’clock. The beds warmed their hidden circuits, for nights were cool here.

Nine-five. A voice spoke from the study ceiling: “Mrs. McClellan, which poem would you like this evening?” The house was silent.

The voice said at last, “Since you express no preference, I shall select a poem at random.” Quiet music rose to back the voice. “Sara Teasdale. As I recall, your favorite . . .

There will come soft rains and the smell of the ground,
And swallows circling with their shimmering sound;

And frogs in the pools singing at night,
And wild plum trees in tremulous white;

Robins will wear their feathery fire,
Whistling their whims on a low fence-wire;

And not one will know of the war, not one
Will care at last when it is done.

Not one would mind, neither bird nor tree,
If mankind perished utterly;

And Spring herself, when she woke at dawn
Would scarcely know that we were gone.”

The fire burned on the stone hearth. The empty chairs faced each other between the silent walls, and the music played.

At ten o’clock the house began to die.

The wind blew. A falling tree bough crashed through the kitchen window. Cleaning solvent, bottled, shattered over the stove. The room was ablaze in an instant!

“Fire!” screamed a voice. The house lights flashed, water pumps shot water from the ceilings. But the solvent spread on the linoleum,
licking, eating, under the kitchen door, while the voices took it up in chorus: “Fire, fire, fire!”

The house tried to save itself. Doors sprang tightly shut, but the windows were broken by the heat and the wind blew and sucked upon the fire.

The house gave ground as the fire in ten billion angry sparks moved with flaming ease from room to room and then up the stairs. While scurrying water rats squeaked from the walls, pistoled their water, and ran for more. And the wall sprays let down showers of mechanical rain.

But too late. Somewhere, sighing, a pump shrugged to a stop. The quenching rain ceased. The reserve water supply which filled the baths and washed the dishes for many quiet days was gone.

The fire crackled up the stairs. It fed upon Picassos and Matisses\(^5\) in the upper halls, like delicacies, baking off the oily flesh, tenderly crisping the canvases into black shavings.

Now the fire lay in beds, stood in windows, changed the colors of drapes!

And then, reinforcements.

From attic trapdoors, blind robot faces peered down with faucet mouths gushing green chemical.

\(^5\) *Picassos* (pih KAH soh) and *Matisses* (mah TEES ihz) paintings by the celebrated modern painters Pablo Picasso (1881–1973) and Henri Matisse (1869–1954).
The fire backed off, as even an elephant must at the sight of a dead snake. Now there were twenty snakes whipping over the floor, killing the fire with a clear cold venom of green froth.

But the fire was clever. It had sent flames outside the house, up through the attic to the pumps there. An explosion! The attic brain which directed the pumps was shattered into bronze shrapnel on the beams.

The fire rushed back into every closet and felt of the clothes that hung there.

The house shuddered, oak bone on bone, its bared skeleton cringing from the heat, its wire, its nerves revealed as if a surgeon had torn the skin off to let the red veins and capillaries quiver in the scalded air. Help, help! Fire! Run, run! Heat snapped mirrors like the first brittle winter ice. And the voices wailed Fire, fire, run, run, like a tragic nursery rhyme, a dozen voices, high, low, like children dying in a forest, alone, alone. And the voices fading as the wires popped their sheathings like hot chestnuts. One, two, three, four, five voices died.

In the nursery the jungle burned. Blue lions roared, purple giraffes bounded off. The panthers ran in circles, changing color, and ten million animals, running before the fire, vanished off toward a distant steaming river . . .

Ten more voices died. In the last instant under the fire avalanche, other choruses, oblivious, could be heard announcing the time, playing music, cutting the lawn by remote-control mower, or setting an umbrella frantically out and in the slamming and opening front door, a thousand things happening, like a clock shop when each clock strikes the hour insanely before or after the other, a scene of maniac confusion, yet unity; singing, screaming, a few last cleaning mice darting bravely out to carry the horrid ashes away! And one voice, with sublime disregard for the situation, read poetry aloud all in the fiery study, until all the film spools burned, until all the wires withered and the circuits cracked.

The fire burst the house and let it slam flat down, puffing out skirts of spark and smoke.

In the kitchen, an instant before the rain of fire and timber, the stove could be seen makingbreakfasts at a psychopathic rate, ten dozen eggs, six loaves of toast, twenty dozen bacon strips, which, eaten by fire, started the stove working again, hysterically hissing!

The crash. The attic smashing into the kitchen and parlor. The parlor into cellar, cellar into subcellar. Deep freeze, armchair, film tapes, circuits, beds, and all like skeletons thrown in a cluttered mound deep under.

Smoke and silence. A great quantity of smoke.

Dawn showed faintly in the east. Among the ruins, one wall stood alone. Within the wall, a last voice said, over and over again and again, even as the sun rose to shine upon the heaped rubble and steam:

“This is August 5, 2026, today is August 5, 2026, today is . . .”
Comprehension Check

Complete the following items after you finish your first read.

1. What is the daily routine of the automated house?

2. What has happened to the rest of the houses in the neighborhood?

3. What are the five spots of paint on the exterior of the house?

4. By the end of the story, what happens to the house?

5. Notebook  Create a storyboard that summarizes the sequence of events in “There Will Come Soft Rains.”

RESEARCH

Research to Clarify  Choose at least one unfamiliar detail from the text. Briefly research that detail. In what way does the information you learned shed light on an aspect of the story?

Research to Explore  Bradbury published this story in 1950. Conduct research about modern “smart houses” to find out which of the technologies he described exist today. Share your findings with the class.