



BOOKS

The Role of Pride in Ray Bradbury's 'Zero Hour' 70 Years After Its Publication

BY ALINA SPARKS · DECEMBER 31, 2017

"Zero Hour" by Ray Bradbury is a science fiction selection that revolves around a recurrent slight central to society's ideals and accepted customs; ignorance of a child's opinions and underestimating the power of one's imagination. This warning is effectively communicated in the form of a story during which a group of aliens enlist the help of children to invade Earth.



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The piece follows the tale of Mink, a 7-year-old girl and the human director of sorts for this operation — much to the amusement of her mother, Mary Morris. “Mink ran into the house, all dirt and sweat. For her seven years she was loud and strong and definite.”

Other characters critical to the plot include Drill, the head communication alien, Joseph Connors, and all the children playing the game, whose objective is to, essentially, aid a team of aliens in their conquest of Earth.

The story begins with the introduction of Invasion, a game that has captured the attention of children nationwide, particularly the progress of the game in Mink’s neighborhood, where she attempts to organize all the metal objects the children have collected in order to aid the Invasion effort.

She is then approached by Joseph Connors, a boy of 12, who wishes to play along with the other children. However, Mink dismisses his pleas stating, “You’re old.”

With her mother’s prompting, Mink begins to elucidate the origin of the phenomenon that is Invasion, as well as its overall objective — the invasion of Earth. She further begins to describe Drill’s ingenious plan to utilize the indifferent attitude parents apply toward children and their imaginations as a key instrument in their attack against Earth — concluding that these accepted customs of society forged children into ideal allies for this particular operation. “Drill says you’re dangerous. Know why? ‘Cause you don’t believe in Martians! They’re going to let us run the world.”

Later that day, Mrs. Morris realizes just how vast the dissemination of invasion across the nation has come to be when speaking to her friend Helen.

Furthermore, she then observes Mink’s conversation with what appears to be rosebush but who, according to Mink, is actually Drill relaying instructions for the Invasion, furthering her growing subconscious alarm. In the end, the Zero Hour arrives, yielding to the aliens’ arrival.

Mrs. Morris, whose suspicions and inklings regarding the queer structure of the day’s

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The story is culminated with Mink's arrival at her parents' hideout, aliens in tow, providing an ominous and chilling conclusion to the narrative.

Bradbury's main purpose of creating the world of Zero Hour was to warn the audience of the danger one poses to oneself and others when handling the ideas and imagination of children with such callous indifference.

Mrs. Morris's disregard for Mink's insisting tale throughout the day perfectly illustrates the inferiority society ascribes to children, and wrongfully so. "Until, one day, they thought of children...And they thought of how grownups are so busy they never look under rosebushes or on lawns."

The piece emphasizes the necessity of offering respect and consideration toward the opinions of children, rather than treating them with the blatant disregard that is so conventional today. The tale depicts the astounding repercussions one of mankind's most prominent flaws can have, no matter how inconsequential the impact may seem — the price of pride.

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I am a freshman in high school with a passion for using my words to help others. I aspire to study journalism at NYU.

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