



# The Bradbury Chronicles: The Life of Ray Bradbury

*By Sam Weller*

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## The Bradbury Chronicles: The Life of Ray Bradbury By Sam Weller

Ray Bradbury is an American literary icon, an architect of wonders whose life has been as fascinating, momentous, and inspiring as his fiction, which has enthralled millions of readers the world over for more than six decades.

Born Rae Douglas Bradbury on August 22, 1920, in Waukegan, Illinois, he displayed an affinity for the fantastic at an early age -- spending hours at the local movie theater, fighting his fear of the dark to escape into glorious made-up worlds. Though he once dreamed of becoming an actor, writing was his true calling, and he remained resolute in his art throughout his early adult years despite numerous rejections -- finally breaking through with publications of his horror and fantasy stories in the "pulp" magazines of the forties. It was not long before he ascended to a higher literary plane, creating the acclaimed works that would solidify his place as one of the most important and influential authors of the twentieth century: **Fahrenheit 451**, **The Martian Chronicles**, **The Illustrated Man**, and **Dandelion Wine**, to name a very few.

Award-winning journalist Sam Weller has been granted unparalleled access to Bradbury's private archives, and has spent hundreds of hours interviewing longtime friends, family members, colleagues, and the author himself. As a result, Weller gives us a uniquely balanced, in-depth, and utterly remarkable portrait of a remarkable man, the life story up until now of a brilliant visionary artist and enigmatic mass of contradictions -- the writer who envisioned rocket travel to the stars but who never learned to drive a car; the futurist who brought astonishing tomorrows to life yet refuses to operate a computer; the passionate free spirit who remained devotedly married to one woman -- his beloved Marguerite -- for more than fifty years.

**The Bradbury Chronicles** is, at once, a poignant love story, an inspiring tale of struggle and accomplishment, and a spellbinding record of an extraordinary era in America's history and the man who helped define it. Here is Ray Bradbury -- dreamer, author, humanist, poet, innovator -- a one-of-a-kind literary force of nature whose extraordinary life can now be celebrated along with the enduring masterworks with which he has graced the world.

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## Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Journalist Weller pays tribute to an American icon in this ebullient authorized biography of Ray Bradbury, author of *Fahrenheit 451* and *The Martian Chronicles*, who was born in Waukegan, Ill., on August 22, 1920. ("I remember the day I was born," Bradbury claims in what is perhaps a sign of his genius—or of the price of access to him.) In highly readable prose, Weller surveys Bradbury's ancestors and family, his boyhood move to Hollywood, his introduction to science fiction and fantasy and his early writing attempts, which reflect the themes that pervade his more mature work: "nostalgia, loneliness, lost love, and death." If Weller places Bradbury in a pantheon occupied by Shakespeare, Melville, Dickens and Poe, he also mentions more than one extramarital affair and his hero's poor eating habits. Highlights include Bradbury's collaboration with John Huston on the film *Moby Dick*, his receiving the National Book Foundation's Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters in 2000 and his recent feud with Michael Moore over the title of Moore's documentary film *Fahrenheit 9/11*. A serious critical biography will have to wait until after the master's death, but for now this adoring portrait will satisfy most Bradbury fans. *Agent, Judith Ehrlich. (Apr. 5)*  
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From School Library Journal

Adult/High School—Weller focuses on Bradbury's professional successes and difficulties. After writing a few stories for pulp magazines, some of which were self-published, Bradbury suddenly found his pieces anthologized in *The Best American Short Stories* (Houghton) and his work in demand from national magazines and publishers. A strong work ethic, along with a little luck and a lot of charm, carried him through a long, successful career. Aside from the masterworks like *Something Wicked This Way Comes* (Bantam, 1983) and *Fahrenheit 451* (Ballantine, 1987) that he's most known for, Bradbury also wrote for television, worked as a script writer for director John Huston's version of *Moby Dick*, and even served as a consultant to Walt Disney for what would become the EPCOT Center. Weller's research—based on interviews with Bradbury as well as family members and colleagues—is almost exhaustive in its detail, and he does a fine job of presenting the facts of his subject's unique life. The lively, conversational prose brings out the writer's winning personality and turns his struggles and successes into a highly readable story. The presentation comes off as a little one-sided at times, but this is a quibble about a book that, overall, is informative, enjoyable, and inspiring.—*Matthew L. Moffett, Northern Virginia Community College, Annandale*

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From [Booklist](#)

**\*Starred Review\*** The title of Weller's biography, the first of the great and influential storyteller Ray Bradbury, is a play on one of Bradbury's most loved books, *The Martian Chronicles* (1950), and a perfect description of Weller's approach. According to *Webster's*, *chronicle* means a "continuous historical account of events arranged in order of time without analysis or interpretation." Although Weller discusses Bradbury's enthusiasms (comics, movies, Halloween, and ice cream) and key themes (loneliness, mortality, magic, censorship, racism, war, and technology), offers frank observations about his personality ("a poster boy for the Peter Pan syndrome"), and describes how Bradbury transformed his past into "autobiographical fantasies," his primary objective is to tell straight the entire, amazing story of how a myopic boy from Waukegan, Illinois, turned himself into the mind-expanding, genre-transcending, and internationally beloved creator of such seminal tales as *The Illustrated Man* (1951) and *Fahrenheit 451* (1953). Bradbury granted literary journalist and lifelong fan Weller unprecedented access to his private life and private archive, and Weller has repaid the favor with a compulsively readable account of an exceptionally prescient, innovative,

eccentric, and dedicated writer who has electrified the imaginations of generations of readers. More scholarly and literary biographies will follow, but none will have the vitality and intimacy of this living portrait.

*Donna Seaman*

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## **Users Review**

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