

**Ray Bradbury** (born in Illinois, the USA, in 1920) is a famous American science fiction novelist, dramatist, poet and writer of fiction for children, whose brilliant books and stories have brought new excitement to the field of imaginative writing. His stories display the remarkable variety and strength that have always characterised his work. He conducts a reader on a tour through time and space — into the future! Among Ray Bradbury's most celebrated works of science fiction and fantasy are *The Maritime Chronicles* (1950), *The Machinery of Joy* (1963), *Tomorrow Midnight* (1966), *Long After Midnight* (1976). Bradbury's most famous novel *Fahrenheit 451* shows a future totalitarian state in which supertelevision presents all that people are to think or know, and the ownership of books is cause for the state to burn volumes and owners alike.

*Bradbury's story The Pedestrian was published in 1951.*

### Exercise 1

**Read the words and word combinations and guess their meaning. Translate them paying attention to the suffixes and prefixes.**

**-ic:** metal — metallic, a metallic voice, a metallic whisper; scene - scenic, a scenic view;

**less:** wind — windless, a windless country; expression — expressionless, expressionless faces;

**-al:** occasion — occasional, occasionally picked up a leaf; season — seasonal, a seasonal sport, seasonal activity;

**in-:** frequent — infrequent, infrequent lamplights; capable — incapable, an incapable student

### Exercise 2

**Translate these word combinations. Pay attention to the use of the past participle:**

the hidden sea;

moonlit avenues;

ill-lit by television light;

brightly lit electric lights.

### Exercise 3

**Read these sentences and translate them:**

1.He would stand upon the corner of a street and look down long moonlit avenues in four directions deciding which way to go.

2.Sometimes he would walk for hours and miles and return only at midnight. He would pause, raise his head, listen, look, and march on.

#### Exercise 4

**Read the story THE PEDESTRIAN and say what seemed strange in the behavior of the pedestrian from the point of view of the police.**

To enter out into that silence that was the city at eight o'clock of a misty evening in November, to put your feet upon that concrete walk and make your way, hands in pockets, through the silence, that was what Mr. Leonard Mead most dearly loved to do. He would stand upon the corner of a crossing and look down long moonlit avenues of sidewalk in four directions, deciding which way to go, but it really made no difference; he was alone in his world of 2131.

Sometimes he would walk for hours and miles and return only at midnight to his house. And on his way he would see the cottages and homes with their dark windows, and only the faintest glimmers of firefly light appeared in television screens behind the windows.

Mr. Leonard Mead would pause, raise his head, listen, look, and march on, his feet making no noise on the walk. For a long while now the sidewalks had been vanishing under flowers and grass. In ten years of walking by night or day, for thousands of miles, he had never met another person walking, not one in all that time.

He now wore soft shoes strolling at night because if he wore hard heels, lights might click on and faces appear, and an entire street be startled by the passing of a lone figure, himself, in the early November evening.

On this particular evening he began his journey in a westerly direction, towards the hidden sea. There was a good crystal frost in the air. You could feel the cold light going on and off, all the branches filled with invisible snow. He listened to the faint push of his soft shoes through autumn leaves with satisfaction, and whistled a cold quiet whistle between his teeth, occasionally picking up a leaf as he passed, examining it in the Infrequent lamplights as he went on, smelling its rusty smell.

"Hello, in there," he whispered to every house on every side as he moved. "What's on tonight on Channel 4, Channel 7, Channel 9? Where are the cowboys rushing? Is it time for a quiz? A review? A comedian falling off the stage?"

The street was silent and long and empty, with only his shadow moving like the shadow of a flying bird. If he closed his eyes and stood very still, frozen, he imagined himself upon the centre of a plain, a cold windless Arizona country with no house in a

thousand miles, and only dry riverbeds, the streets, for company.

He turned back on a side street circling around toward his home. He was not far from it when the lone car turned a corner quite suddenly and flashed a fierce white cone of light upon him. He stood stunned by the illumination.

A metallic voice called to him:

"Stand still. Stay where you are! Don't move!"

He stopped.

"Put up your hands."

"But -" he said.

"Your hands up!"

The police, of course, but what a rare, incredible thing; in a city of three million, there was only one police car left. Ever since a year ago, 2130, the election year, the force had been cut down from three cars to one. Crime was ebbing; there was no need now for the police; this one lone car was wandering and wandering the empty streets.

"Your name?" said the police car in a metallic whisper. He couldn't see the men in it because of the bright light in his eyes.

"Leonard Mead," he said.

"Speak up!"

"Leonard Mead!"

"Business or profession?"

"I guess you'd call me a writer."

"No profession," said the police car, as if talking to itself.

"You might say that," said Mr. Mead. He hadn't written in years. Magazines and books didn't sell any more. Everything went on in the tomblike houses at night now, he thought, continuing his fancy, the tombs, ill-lit by television light, where the people sat like dead, the multi-coloured lights touching their expressionless faces but never really touching them.

"No profession," said the metallic voice. "What are you doing out?"

"Walking," said Leonard Mead.

"Walking!"

"Just walking," he said, but his face felt cold.

"Walking, just walking, walking?"

"Yes, sir."

"Walking where? For what?"

"Walking for air. Walking to see."

"Your address!"

"Eleven South, St. James Street."

"And there is air in your house, you have an air-conditioner, Mr. Mead?"

"Yes."

"And you have a viewing screen in your house to see with?"

"No"

"No?" There was a quiet that in itself was an accusation.

"Are you married, Mr. Mead?"

"No."

"Not married," said the police car. The moon was high and clear among the stars and the houses were grey and silent.

"Nobody wanted me," said Leonard Mead with a smile.

"Don't speak unless you're told to!"

Leonard Mead waited in the cold night.

"Just walking, Mr. Mead?"

"Yes."

"But you haven't explained for what purpose."

"I explained: for air and to see, and just to walk."

"Have you done this often?"

"Every night for years."

"Well, Mr. Mead," said the voice. There was a pause. Then the back door of the police car sprang wide. "Get in."

"Wait a minute, I haven't done anything! I protest!"

"Mr. Mead. Get in."

"Where are you taking me?"

The car hesitated, then said, "To the Psychiatric Centre for Research on Regressive Tendencies."

Leonard Mead got in. The door shut with a soft dull sound. The police car rolled through the night avenues. They passed one house on one street a moment later, one in an electric city of houses that were dark, but this one particular house had all its electric lights brightly lit, every window a loud yellow illumination, square and warm in the cold darkness.

"That's my house," said Leonard Mead.

No one answered him.

The car moved down the empty streets and off away, leaving the empty streets with the empty sidewalks, and no sound and no motion all the rest of the chill November night.

## Exercise 5

**Read and translate the sentences.**

1. On his way he would see the cottages and homes with their dark windows, and only the faintest glimmers of firefly light appeared in television screens behind the windows.
2. For a long while now the sidewalks had been vanishing under flowers and grass.
3. He now wore soft shoes strolling at night because if he wore hard heels, lights might click on and faces appear, and an entire street be startled by the passing of a lone figure, himself, in the early November evening.
4. If the branches were filled with invisible snow.
5. He listened to the faint push of his soft shoes through autumn leaves with satisfaction, and whistled, occasionally picking up a leaf, examining it in the infrequent lamplights, smelling its rusty smell.
6. Ever since a year ago the force had been cut down from three cars to one.

Exercise 6

**Answer the questions:**

1. When and where did this episode take place? What was the world like at that time?
2. Who was Leonard Mead? What were his habits?
3. What thoughts were in his mind when he was strolling along the empty streets?
4. What was the common evening pastime of all the people of that time?
5. Which of Leonard Mead's answers do you think seemed the most surprising, and even shocking to the police?
6. How did the conversation with the police end?

Exercise 7

**Give an explanation of these facts from the story:**

1. The streets were silent and empty.
2. The police were a rare, incredible thing; in a city of three million, there was only one police car left.
3. The police did not consider writing to be a profession.
4. The cold silence of the police after each of Leonard Mead's answers was in itself an accusation.
5. Leonard Mead was taken to the Psychiatric Centre for Research on Regressive Tendencies.

Exercise 8

**Say how the author shows the reader what kind of person the main character is:**

- through his action;
- through his thoughts;
- through his description;
- through someone's opinion.

### Exercise 9

#### **Answer the questions:**

1. What do you think it was that distinguished Leonard Mead from the people of his generation?
2. Does Leonard Mead seem to be a man who differs greatly from the people of our day?
3. Say what impression he has made on you.