Questions for The Veldt

The rise in the popularity of television had a direct influence on Bradbury’s story “The Veldt.” At the time the story was written, many American families were acquiring their first television sets, and no one was sure exactly how this new technology would impact the relationships among family members. Some people were afraid that watching too much television would lead to the total breakdown of the family unit. This fear is directly reflected in “The Veldt,” but in the story, Bradbury heightens the odds by creating a machine that not only allows children to detach emotionally from their parents, but one that can also physically destroy the parents, as well.

FOCUS ON THE FAMILY

 Describe and evaluate the relationships between the parents (George and Lydia) and the children (Wendy and Peter) in the Hadley family. (comprehension and evaluation)

1. How does Bradbury show us what their relationship is like?
   - What does the interchange between George and the children reveal?
   - Lydia quotes an old saying, “Children are carpets, they should be stepped on occasionally.” Identify the figure of speech used in this saying and explain what the saying means. Why does Lydia quote it at this point in the story?

2. Compare and contrast what George and Lydia Hadley give their children and what the children really need. (comprehension)
   - What do George and Lydia Hadley give their children?
   - What do the children need?
   - What is the result of this discrepancy?

3. George names the children’s creation of the African veldt in the nursery “death thoughts” and muses that they are “awfully young... for death thoughts.” Explain the factors that produce the “death thoughts” in the children.

4. According to David McClean, the psychologist, what is the problem in the Hadley family? Do you agree or disagree with his diagnosis? Why? (comprehension and evaluation)

5. Imagine a solution to the problem in the Hadley family. How would the story’s end differ with your solution? (synthesis)

FOCUS ON THE HOUSE

1. What is George’s attitude toward the nursery and the Happy-life Home at the beginning of the story? How and why does his attitude change as the story progresses?
2. Why does Lydia want to shut off the house and take a ‘vacation’ from it?

- Why is the use of the term vacation in this context ironic?
- Why is she uncomfortable/unhappy in the house?
- How effective is this use of irony? (analysis/evaluation)

3. George tells Peter that he is thinking about turning the house off for a month to “Live a carefree one-for-all existence.”

- Why is living in a house that does everything for you not “carefree?”
- Imagine and describe a living situation that would be “carefree.” Is such a situation possible and sustainable? (synthesis/analysis)

FOCUS ON THEME

1. Peter says, “I wish you were dead!” George responds by saying, “We were, for a long while. Now we’re going to really start living. Instead of being handled and massaged, we’re going to live.”

- Define what it means for George to “really live.”
- How does his definition of living compare with your understanding of what it means to really live?
- Why is this interchange ironic?
- How effective is this use of irony?

2. Evaluate the end of the story. Why is the last line as follows:

“A cup of tea?” asked Wendy in the silence.

- What point is Bradbury trying to make?
- Do you think it is an effective way to end the story? Why or why not?
- What is the irony? How effective is this use of irony?
- What is the theme of the story?
Reading “The Veldt” by Ray Bradbury

Stop reading after Lydia says, “Why don’t we shut the whole house off for a few days and take a vacation?”

Why do you think Lydia wants to shut off the house? At this stage in the story, what do you think will be the children’s reaction to this idea? Support your opinion with evidence from the story.

Stop reading after George says, “I’m starting to wonder.”

What is the nursery? What do the walls of the nursery reflect?

In what way can the nursery serve the needs of both parents and children?

How does Bradbury describe the physical appearance of Peter and Wendy when they return home in the evening? How does their physical description contrast with what we know about their mental activities?

At the conclusion of the story, answer the following questions.

**Foreshadowing** is a major technique used in this story. Give at least 2 examples from the story and tell what it does to maintain reader interest and enrich the story’s meaning.

**Personification** is giving nonhuman, inanimate objects human feeling, traits, or actions. Give two examples of personification from the story.

Do you think the children realize what they have done to their parents? Explain your answer.

How is childhood represented in this story? What are the effects of the house and nursery on the children?

What does the story suggest as the source of the children’s murderous hatred for their parents?

Who is parenting the children in the story? Explain.

What mistakes have George and Lydia made in raising their children? Explain.

“The Veldt” was published in 1951. It offers a view of what Bradbury predicted family life and technology would be like around the year 2000. Is it an accurate view? Why or why not? What predictions are correct? Incorrect? What does he leave out?

What do you think happened at the end of the story? Why?