**‘THE PEDESTRIAN’ BY RAY BRADBURY**

**Questions for Analysis – Suggested answers in bold underneath**

**N.B. These are not all the answers. They are suggested and will hopefully link into what you have written down. Always explain your thoughts and choices.**

1. How does Leonard Mead spend his evenings? (Paragraphs 1-3)

**He spends his evenings walking alone, very quietly for hours around the streets. He would take in his surroundings, watching and listening. He observes and thinks about what he sees. He is very aware of his environment and we get the impression that he is different to everyone else.**

**‘dearly loved to do’ suggests that Mead has strong feelings about this past time. It means a lot to him.**

1. What do you think everyone else does in the evenings? (The first three paragraphs don’t really tell us directly, but there are clues). (Paragraphs 1-3)

**‘through the silences’ and ‘he was alone’ suggests that all is quiet, no one else is out walking, they are at home.**

**‘dark windows’ suggests that their homes are not lit up, they are in bed or sitting in darkness.**

**‘lights might click on and faces appear’ suggests that people are being so quiet that any disturbance outside would draw their attention.**

**‘whisperings and murmurs’ suggests that everyone is quiet, their voices are low, they do not want to draw attention to themselves and they are potentially scared.**

1. What is symbolic about the idea of Leonard Mead standing at an “intersection”? (Paragraph 1) Have a think about this one. What is the British word for ‘intersection’?

**The British word for ‘intersection’ is crossroad. A crossroad is symbolic of making choice or decision. Usually this decision is unavoidable as you would need to carry on, take a different turn or go back. Although Mead’s choice of direction ‘made no difference’ the symbolism is that he has made a choice to be out walking in the first place. He has chosen a different path to everyone else in the city. The ‘intersection’ represents Mead taking one path and everyone else taking the other resulting in him now being ‘alone in this world’. He is different from everyone else.**

1. What kind of atmosphere is created by the writer in the first three paragraphs?

**There is an atmosphere of isolation, loneliness and lifelessness. Essentially negative and dark. Not somewhere you would want to be.**

**The idea of loneliness is illustrated through the fact that Mead walks around looking into the windows of other houses. Perhaps he longs for companionship. We learn later he is not married and lives alone. He has no one to talk to.**

1. Find and make a note of the word choice, imagery and/or figurative language (similes/metaphors) used by Bradbury to create this atmosphere. (Paragraphs 1-3) Quote and **really** explain what your quotes suggest.

**These are suggestions, there are more.**

**Lifelessness**

**‘graveyard’, ‘grey phantoms’ and ‘tomb-like’ all connote death. However, the suggestion is that the city is so quiet and lifeless it is as if everyone is dead. No one is moving or making a noise. The city is a graveyard full of tombs inhabited by ghosts.**

**Isolation and loneliness**

**‘that silence’, ‘through the silences’, ‘he was alone in this world’, ‘a lone figure, himself’**

1. Why has Bradbury described Leonard Mead’s walk at night as “not unequal to walking through a graveyard”? (Paragraph 2)

**It is a silent as a graveyard. In a graveyard people are ‘there’ but they are lifeless and buried. The people in the houses are as quiet as the dead and the houses are the tombs they rest in. Bradbury is using the image of the graveyard to highlight the deathly silence that Mead experiences as he walks.**

1. Light and dark imagery has been used extensively in the opening three paragraphs. What are the connotations of light/dark and why have they been used to help portray the reality of 2053AD?   (Hint, if you have studied Psycho, think about the black and white imagery used).

**Light and dark imagery in literature is often used to convey a deeper meaning, emotion, atmosphere or mood.**

**Light connotes positivity, goodness, innocence, happiness etc.**

**Darkness often suggests negativity, evil, fear, death and the unknown.**

**In the opening paragraphs the imagery is mostly dark, ‘misty evening’, ‘dark windows’ and ‘grey phantoms’. This suggests that A.D. 2053 is a worrying time to live. There is little life and enjoyment and it appears that people are fearful and complying to the rules of a tyrannical and oppressive government.**

**There is glimpses of light, ‘moonlit avenues’ and ‘glimmers of firefly light’. Notice that these descriptions connect with the natural world. The darkness feels wholly man made.**

1. Why has Leonard Mead changed his footwear for walking at night? What does this suggest about 2053AD? (Paragraph 3) Go into detail here.

**He has changed his footwear as he does not want to be detected. He wants to move noiselessly around the silent streets. It is clear from, ‘For long ago, he had wisely changed.’ that he has had an experience with the authorities and dogs and has learnt that he needed to be quieter. This suggests that 2053 is an oppressive time and the city is under control of an authority. This is where the dystopian genre really kicks in. People are scared to be outside their homes after dark as they will be reprimanded.**

1. “…occasionally picking up a leaf as he passed, examining its skeletal pattern in the infrequent lamplights he went on, smelling its rusty smell.” (Paragraph 4).  Comment fully on the significance of the **imagery** used by Bradbury in the above extract.

**This is a mixture of natural imagery (‘leaf’) and the imagery of death and decay (‘skeletal’ and ‘rusty’). It is significant as the story progresses it becomes clear that Mead is comfortable in the natural world. He understands it and feels close to it. However, the natural world is being overshadowed by technology. Rust connotes decay of an object it is also a fungal disease of plants which connects directly to the idea that the world that Mead inhabits is slowly dying.**

**The ‘infrequent lamplights’ should be noted as they suggest that there is no need to light the streets as no one will be out walking after dark. The authorities have such a tight hold over society that they do not need to light up the streets to see people breaking the law. Remember there is only one police car necessary as crime is at an all time low.**

1. What is significance about the “moon-white house”? (Paragraph 8) Think about the laughter coming from there, as well as the connotations of light associated with it.

**‘moon-white’ suggests that the house is lit up. Are there signs of life inside, ‘murmur of laughter’? This is what Meads yearns for, is there someone in there like him? However, it is most likely that the inhabitants are simply watching their ‘viewing screen’. The house is lit up by a natural light that they cannot control. It is not lit up by the house lights. The hoped for connection is lost, whoever lives in the house is following the rules. Mead is different from them, the ‘murmur’ is in his mind.**

1. How does the writer emphasise Mead’s isolation in paragraphs 6-8? Think about the idea of isolation. What does it actually mean, how is this shown?

**Isolation means to be separated or segregated from something or someone. To be alone.**

**Isolation can be physical and emotional. Mead is experiencing both.**

**The metaphorical comparison of his location to a ‘Arizona desert with no house for a thousand miles’ could not empahsise his isolation more. Not only that but a desert, although natural, is bare, dry and barren. No life to speak of and no way of replenishing and creating life.**

**Mead’s rhetorical questions to himself highlight his isolation as he is talking to no one, ‘A quiz? A revue?’ He is suggesting that the programmes on the screens are repetitive and meaningless, much like the existence in this city.**

**When Bradbury states that in ‘ten years’ and ‘thousands of miles’ Mead has never met another person, his isolation is clear in that his behaviour is atypical of rest of society. His actions are different, and he is alone as a result.**

1. Describe the contrast between the roads at day and at night in paragraph 9. Why is the imagery used here effective?

**The roads during the day are busy, bustling, crammed, hectic and jammed packed. They are full of life. The imagery of the insects is powerful as insects are often seen in large numbers, scurrying around, relentlessly crawling over each other busy getting from A to B in a hurry. Insects are part of the natural world, the world Mead connects with, the world of life and living. It is a pitiful example of life but still it is important to notice that the buy times in this city are illustrated with a comparison of the natural world.**

**The roads at night are compared to a barren dried up riverbed. Infertile, sterile and unfruitful. No life.**

1. In paragraph 9, Bradbury describes the surge of cars metaphorically as “scarab beetles.” In today’s society, scarab beetles are also known as “dung beetles” as they survive on faeces.  However, in ancient Egypt, the scarab beetle was a symbol of re-birth. It was considered to be the most important amulet (object considered to bring good luck and protection),and was as sacred to Egyptians as the cross is to Christians today.

Explain fully why you think Bradbury has used this comparison, and comment on the way in which it highlights the prestige of cars/machines in 2053AD.

**The comparison suggests that the view of cars in AD2053 is one of admiration, importance and power. This story was written in 1951 so Bradbury is projecting over 100 years in the future. Cars were available in 1951 and many people had them. However, not every household and two car families were non-existent. Bradbury suggests that cars are not just a symbol of status but a necessity. They have a role in society perhaps deemed more important than human connection and nature. The landscape is urban, and the dystopian city is manmade. Symbolically, cars add to the theme of isolation as people are isolated in their cars.**

1. Comment on the role of the police car in the story. How does it help create a chilling picture of the future?

**The police car represents the control of the authorities/government. There is only one which suggests that there is very low crime because people are scared and conforming to the law. It has no driver which highlights the idea that technology has progressed to the point that everything is automated. Human judgement and consideration has been removed as the police car is controlled by someone or something else. This is chilling as machines appear to have authority and control. Bradbury is warning the reader (as he often does in his work) that progression is not always the way forward. Technology can be dangerous. The essence of humanity is at risk.**

1. Why is being a writer not considered to be a profession in 2053 AD, and in what ways is this idea frighteningly ominous (menacing, threatening)?

**A writer is not seen as a profession because there is no need for writers. Everyone is watching their ‘viewing screens’, not reading. The nature of the story suggests that the screens are used to control/distract society. We could assume that they are being used to brainwash them. Throughout history, literature has often been used to speak out and communicate to others about issues in society. It is unsurprising that this was once Mead’s ‘profession’ as he is clearly someone who does not conform. It is also unsurprising that the authorities have all but removed literature from society as it is a way of curbing free speech. This is frightening as the human race will simply become robotic and vacant, swarming about their business. When they switch the lights and their viewing screens off at, they will switch the lights off in their minds. Mead can be seen as fighting against this.**

1. “The light held him fixed, like a museum specimen, needle thrust through chest.”  Explain why this is a particularly effective image to use here.

**This is effective as he is being compared to something displayed in a museum. This suggests he is something to be looked at, examined, unusual. An anomaly to be studied. It is also effective as it makes clear he feels he cannot move. Technology has frozen him to the spot highlighting the power it has.**

1. Comment on the way Bradbury develops the imagery of death in these sections.

**‘tomb-like houses’, ‘people sat like the dead’ and ‘but never really touching them’ all continue the imagery of death. Humans are seen almost zombie like, untouched emotionally by whatever is on the viewing screens. This is illustrated when Bradbury writes, ‘lights touching their faces, but never really touching them’. They are simply existing, not really living.**

18. According to society’s laws in 2053AD, what have Leonard Mead’s crimes been so far?

**Not having a profession, walking with what appears to be no purpose and not having a viewing screen. There is the possibility that not being married and speaking when not spoken to is a problem too.**

19. Why, when ordered to get into the police car, did Leonard walk “like a man suddenly drunk”?

**He has lost control of his legs. Bradbury wants us to see Mead’s legs buckling beneath him as he understands his fate and is scared. This image clearly tells the reader that Mead is going somewhere he may not return from and if he does, he may be changed forever. This makes it clear to the reader the risk that Mead has been taking every evening.**

20. Describe the car Mead gets into. Which of the senses is focused on here and why?

**The car is compared to a jail cell, ‘a little black jail with bars’. Note the dark imagery. A sign of where Mead is going and symbolic of the prison like society he lives in. It gives the reader the sense that there is no escape from this situation, Mead must enter the car. Sense of smell is focussed on. The harshness of the antiseptic cleaness is overpowering. Bradbury knows this and uses it to connect with the reader.**

21. What do you think “The Psychiatric Centre for Research on Regressive Tendencies” means? What do you think might happen to Mead here?

**It is a centre to treat people who do not conform to the rules of society. Someone like Mead who enjoys fresh air and going walking, writing for a living will be treated, perhaps through drugs or, since this is a dystopian story, harsh physical ‘therapies’ to change his behaviour and mindset. Regressive suggests that Mead is viewed as someone who is moving backwards and not developing like those around him. Essentially, he believes that progression for progression’s sake is detracting from the natural beauty and wonder of the world he once lived in.**

22. Why is Mead’s house different to all those around it and what does this suggest about Mead?

**It suggests that Mead is different, has a mind of his own and does not want to live in this type of society. He is the light that shines in a dark world centred around technology and detachment. He is alive and those around him are ghosts of what the human race used to be. He can ‘see’ the world and does not agree with what he sees. His house is a beacon of light in the graveyard that is the city.**