'The Veldt' is a classic short story by American writer Ray Bradbury, first printed in The Saturday Evening Post in 1950, and published in Bradbury's collection The Illustrated Man in 1951. In the story, the Hadleys live a life of leisure in a fully automated house called "The Happylife Home". Parents George and Lydia become concerned by their children Peter and Wendy's fascination with their "nursery", a virtual reality room that can recreate any desired scenario and allow them to live within it. George and Lydia are so concerned by their children's obsession for the "nursery", which has become stuck on the African Veldt setting, complete with prowling lions, that they call in a psychologist, David. David advises them to shut down the Happylife Home and live self-sufficiently. Just before George and Lydia can take this advice, Peter and Wendy lure them into the Veldt one last time. Later, David discovers Peter and Wendy placidly eating their lunch on the virtual Veldt as the lions consume the remains of their parents. 'The Veldt' has been adapted for radio, TV, stage and cinema productions.

**Summary**

In "The Veldt," George and [Lydia Hadley](https://www.gradesaver.com/ray-bradbury-short-stories/study-guide/character-list#lydia-hadley) are the parents of Wendy and [Peter Hadley](https://www.gradesaver.com/ray-bradbury-short-stories/study-guide/character-list#peter-hadley), and they live in a technologically driven house that will do everything for its inhabitants - transport you upstairs, brush your teeth, cook the food, and clean the house. The story begins when Lydia asks George if he's noticed anything wrong with the nursery, the most expensive and exciting room of the house. The glass walls have the ability to project the landscape and environment of any place that the mind of the visitor wishes. During this particular visit, George and Lydia are surrounded by the African countryside. In the distance, lions are licking the bones of their prey clean. The images are so startlingly lifelike that when the holographic lions begin to charge, George and Lydia run for the door to escape.

Outside of the nursery, Lydia comments that she heard screams coming from the room earlier in the day, but George tries to ease her worries. He wants to believe that the children are psychologically healthy, not that they are fixated on blood and violence. After all, one of the selling points of the room was that the children would be able to use the room as an outlet for their emotions, and the places that the room visited would provide information for the adults who were curious about the young minds. Lydia senses that something dark is brooding in her children's brain. As they sit down to dinner, which is all provided through the house's technology, George suggests shutting down the house and living in a simpler manner, something he has suggested before and used as a punishment for his children. Lydia is thrilled by the idea because she feels as if she has been replaced for the house. The house is the mother, wife, and homemaker that she once was, and she feels purposeless.

George visits the room again for further observation, and he attempts to change the scenery to Aladdin. Alas, nothing changes, and he begins to think that his children have maintained control over the environment, furthering his concern that his children have an unhealthy obsession with the veldt. When they arrived home from a carnival, he decided to ask them about the persistence of the savannah, but they tried to deny it. Wendy goes into the room to inspect it, and when she returns she reports that it is no longer Africa, but rather woodland. George and Lydia are highly skeptical, and they believe that Wendy entered the room and changed it after they returned from the fair. One of the clues that make George believe the room was altered was his wallet on the floor of the nursery, smelling of hot grass and showing teeth marks.

As George and Lydia go to bed, they decide to call [David McClean](https://www.gradesaver.com/ray-bradbury-short-stories/study-guide/character-list#david-mcclean) and have him come over to inspect the nursery. The sounds of screams travel from downstairs - Wendy and Peter have left their bedrooms and gone back to the nursery. Lydia comments, "Those screams - they sound familiar." At the end of the story, they will find out why they sound so familiar. The next morning, Peter questions his father about the future of the nursery. "You aren't going to lock up the nursery for good, are you?" asked Peter. George explains that they were thinking of shutting the house down for a while and living in a more traditional manner, and Peter responds poorly. Peter vaguely threatens his father and stomps off.

When David McClean inspects the room, he admits that it gives him a bad feeling. George presses him for more concrete facts, but David can only offer him his intuition. He says to George, "This doesn't feel good, I tell you. Trust my hunches and my instincts. I have a nose for something bad. This is very bad. My advice to you is to have the whole damn room torn down and your children brought to me every day during the next year for treatment." Why, exactly, are things so dire? The children are furious with their parents and the idea of the nursery being taken away. McClean tells George that the house has replaced him and his wife, and now the house is far more important than their biological parents. McClean believes that there is "real hatred" in the scenes of the nursery, and George decides to turn it off instantly. As they leave, McClean picks something up on the ground - Lydia's scarf. It's bloody.

George told his children that the nursery would be turned off, as well as the rest of the house. They began screaming and throwing a hysterical fit. They begged for more time in the nursery, and Lydia suggested that turning it off so suddenly was not a good idea. At first George resisted the idea of turning it back on, but eventually he relented and allowed the children a little bit more time. George and Lydia went upstairs to get ready for the vacation while the children played in the nursery one final time.

From their bedroom, George and Lydia’s children call them to quickly come downstairs. They ran downstairs but didn't see their children anywhere. When they couldn't find them, they looked for them in the nursery. The savannah and the lions had returned to the nursery, and the door slammed behind them. They called for Wendy and Peter, but they had locked the door from the outside. They beat against the door but no one opened them, and the lions began to surround them and move closer. Mr. and Mrs. Hadley screamed, and suddenly they realized why the screams sounded so familiar. David McClean arrived shortly after to greet everyone, but he did not see George and Lydia. The children sat and ate lunch in the nursery, looking out on the water hole and the lions feasting in the distance. "Where are your father and mother?" asked David, and Wendy simply responded, "Oh, they'll be here directly." As they watch the vultures swoop down, Wendy asks, "A cup of tea?" and the story ends.

**Analysis**

In this dark and troubling story, Bradbury writes a precautionary tale of the advance of technology and the importance of maintaining communication during these technological advances. In the Hadley's "Happy-life Home," the house fulfills all of their needs and desires. While at first this was a major advantage to the Hadley's and a primary reason for the desirability of the home, it has now become a point of stress rather than happiness. Both parents struggle to find fulfillment in their everyday life because the house has replaced their traditional roles as mother and father. At different points in the story, both parents contemplate going back to a "normal" house even though it would mean extra work and tasks for them everyday.

Bradbury juxtaposes the advance of technology with the decline in interpersonal communication. The Hadley children, Wendy and Peter, are both manipulative and stubborn. They fail to have any positive communications with their parents during the story. Many of their interactions end in a thinly veiled threat or a strategically placed crying session in order to secure what they want. While this may not be entirely uncommon behavior of children, the parents are unable to respond appropriately to their children. Stripped of their parenting duties, they have forgotten how to communicate with their children. In every interaction between parents and children, the children receive what they want. These negative interactions emphasize the importance of inter-family communications.

George and Lydia attribute their lack of an ability to communicate with their children to the house's automation, but this brings to light the idea that parenting is more than simply providing your child with everything he or she would like. The Hadley's believed that this would solve their problems, but it has only caused more problems. The house that provides everything has rendered them unnecessary and inconvenient. Somehow, the Hadley's must find a way to reassert themselves in their children's eyes and provide them with a form of support that is not possible to receive from the house.

As George and Lydia struggle to find their identity as parents, they are simultaneously struggling with their personal identities. Lydia confesses to George that she would much rather turn the house "off" and go back to giving the children baths, cooking dinner, and doing the laundry. Lydia's concern for finding a purpose highlights a broader human concern to find importance in your daily tasks and the need to think that you are making progress and contributing to society. This basic need does not cease with the advent of automation and technology, according to Bradbury.

Finally, the science of psychology plays a major role in the story. It is revealed that the original purpose of the nursery was to study the minds of children, for what they left on the wall would provide a glimpse into the inner workings of their minds. Even though George and Lydia have hunches that something is wrong with the never changing African veldt, it is not until psychologist David McClean arrives that they know for sure that something is seriously wrong. He insists that the house be shut down immediately and the children start psychological treatment as soon as possible. Bradbury positions psychology as a possible treatment for the children's dire state.

"The Veldt" presents technology as something that makes life easy—maybe too easy. In fact, technology makes life so easy that it's not even really living any more, according to George. Most of the technology in "The Veldt" seems to ruin the perfectly fine way of life that existed before. So the kids aren't reading anymore or even going out to play; instead, they're just playing with the newest cool gadget, the nursery. (Which is, believe it or not, cooler than the Wii or iPad.) But despite all the cool tech, it's clear that in "The Veldt," the more technology you have, the more dissatisfaction you have, because you start ignoring your family and start hanging out with felines.

In "The Veldt," family is the opposite of technology. What we mean is that families are supposed to be one way in this story (as in, kids are supposed to listen to their parents), but when technology is thrown in the mix, everything goes topsy-turvy. Lydia doesn't do the housework (the horrors!), the kids make their own rules, and father George definitely doesn't wear the pants. So, in "The Veldt," technology can mess up that normal family we've all grown used to. This probably wouldn't matter so much if it were just one family, but family here may be a small version of society; and if the family breaks down when they get new technology, there's not a lot of hope for the rest of us.

Dissatisfaction: it's what's for dinner. That is, if your automatic kitchen is doing the cooking and you yourself have nothing to do. In "The Veldt," thanks to technology, people are unhappy. Lydia Hadley doesn't work and feels useless; George is so unsatisfied that he's smoking and drinking too much; and the kids are so dissatisfied with their parents that they've found another parental figure. (Spoiler: it's the nursery.) We could say that, in "The Veldt," dissatisfaction comes from the effect of technology on the family. But this story isn't just about some made-up technology; it's very much about the 1950s, when people came home from World War II to discover they had money and lots of stuff, but weren't always happy.

"The Veldt" is a story about a virtual reality room that gets out of control. But it's also the story about how parents and children don't see eye-to-eye. Even when they're looking at the same stuff. For instance, Peter and Wendy probably think a trip to New York is fun; but George and Lydia look at that as a Very Bad Idea. To the kids, the parents are overbearing tyrants who should be fed to lions. But George and Lydia think they're laying down reasonable rules (like don't kill anyone. That's pretty reasonable.) So while the virtual reality room lets different people live in different realities, in many ways, they already do.

The Hadley family lives in an automated house called "the Happylife Home,” filled with machines that aid them in completing everyday tasks, such as tying their shoes, bathing them, or cooking their food. The two children, Peter and Wendy,[[a]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Veldt_(short_story)#cite_note-2) enjoy time in the "nursery", a [virtual reality](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Virtual_reality) room able to realistically reproduce any place they imagine, and grow increasingly attached to it.

The parents, George and Lydia, begin to wonder if there is something wrong with their way of life. Lydia tells George, "That's just it. I feel like I don't belong here. The house is wife and mother now, and nursemaid. Can I compete with an African [veldt](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Veld)? Can I give a bath and scrub the children as efficiently or quickly as the automatic scrub bath can? I cannot."[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Veldt_(short_story)#cite_note-3) They are perplexed that the nursery is stuck on an [African](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Africa) landscape setting, with lions in the distance, eating an unidentifiable animal carcass. There they also find recreations of their personal belongings and hear strangely familiar screams. Wondering why their children are so concerned with this scene of death, they decide to call a [psychologist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psychologist).

The psychologist, David McClean, suggests they turn off the house, move to the country, and learn to be more self-sufficient. Peter and Wendy strongly resist and beg their parents to let them have one last visit to the nursery. They give in and allow the children more time in the nursery. When George and Lydia come to fetch them, the children lock their parents into the nursery with the pride of lions. Shortly after, David comes by to look for George and Lydia. He finds the children enjoying lunch in the nursery and sees the lions eating carcasses in the distance, which are implied to be the parents.

LitCharts Summary and analysis Part by Part:

Summary Part 1:

The story opens during a conversation between the Hadley parents, [**George**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/characters/george-hadley) and [**Lydia**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/characters/lydia-hadley), in their thirty thousand-dollar **[Happylife Home](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/symbols/the-happylife-home)**. The futuristic Happylife Home fulfills their every need: it clothes them, feeds them, and even rocks them to sleep. As the futuristic Home makes dinner for the family, “humming to itself,” Lydia asks George to take a look at the Home’s “[**nursery**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/symbols/the-nursery),” or to call a psychologist in to examine it. George agrees to look at it himself. As they walk toward the nursery, motion-sensor lights in the hallway automatically turn on and off as they track the parents’ progress.

Analysis Part 1:

The first few lines establish the setting as a technological future of plenty, centered around an easeful domesticity in which the family literally doesn’t have to do any work of their own. At the same time, the branded “Happylife Home” suggests the consumerism behind this seeming paradise and the mention of the need for a psychologist suggests all actually isn’t as wonderful as it seems. “Taking a look” at the “nursery” uses language that makes the nursery sound like a car or machine, and makes it clear that even child-rearing in this world has been “outsourced” to technology.

Summary Part 2:

The parents reach the [**nursery**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/symbols/the-nursery), the most expensive and sophisticated feature of the **[Happylife Home](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/symbols/the-happylife-home)**. Before their eyes, the blank walls of the nursery transform into a three-dimensional African [**veldt**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/symbols/the-veldt). George feels the intense heat of the sun and begins to sweat. He wants to get out of the nursery, saying that everything looks normal but that it is “a little too real,” but [**Lydia**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/characters/lydia-hadley) tells him to wait. They observe more details in the veldt: the smell of grass, water, animals and dust, and the sound of antelopes and vultures. Lydia points out the lions that have been eating in the distance. They can’t tell what the lions are eating, but it makes Lydia nervous. She hears a scream, but George says he didn’t.

Analysis Part 2:

The narrator points out how expensive the nursery is in order to illustrate the extent to which George and Lydia have spoiled their children. But our expectations of what a nursery should look like are totally upended by the frightening veldt that it actually presents. That this veldt reality appears “too real” establishes the allure of manufactured reality, how it can be more stimulating than actual reality. Meanwhile, it’s interesting that the scene the children have created is one of primeval nature, rather than a cartoonish fantasy. The screams will grow in importance as the story continues.

Summary Part 3:

As the lions approach them, [**George**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/characters/george-hadley) admires the “genius” of the [**nursery**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/symbols/the-nursery). To him, the room is a “miracle of efficiency.” It is so real that it becomes frightening sometimes; but for the most part, he muses, “what fun for everyone.” The lions stop fifteen feet away from George and [**Lydia**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/characters/lydia-hadley), “feverishly and startlingly real,” and then charge at the couple. George and Lydia run out into the hall and slam the door. Lydia is crying with terror, but George is laughing; he reminds Lydia that the nursery’s reality isn’t real.

Analysis Part 3:

George’s amazement at the nursery’s virtual reality attests to this room’s status as the peak of human power and technology. Bradbury’s description of the nursery—“what fun for everyone”—resembles an advertisement for a theme park or movie. The fact that the nursery sometimes feels a little too real again references the overstimulation of mass entertainment – for Bradbury the nursery represents a logical extension of television. Here, Lydia feels the line between reality and virtual reality beginning to blur.

Summary Part 4:

Lydia, still afraid, says that the [**veldt**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/symbols/the-veldt) is “too real.” She tells George to make sure their children, [**Wendy**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/characters/wendy-hadley) and [**Peter**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/characters), stop reading about Africa, and instructs him to lock up the nursery for a few days. George suggests that Lydia perhaps has been working too hard and needs to rest, but Lydia argues the opposite—that she has too little to do, and is therefore thinking too much. She suggests that they shut off the **[Happylife Home](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/symbols/the-happylife-home)** and take a vacation. She expresses the desire to do routine human tasks that the Happylife Home does for them: cooking eggs, mending socks, cleaning the house. She convinces George that the Home is rendering them unnecessary, and that it’s having a negative effect on their psychological and physical health.

Analysis Part 4:

The Hadley parents’ unhappiness isn’t caused by the fact that they are working too hard—rather, it’s that they have nothing to do. The Happylife Home has taken over all of their daily tasks, such that they no longer feel useful and necessary in their own home. Lydia’s desire to cook and clean once again suggests the idea that machines that fulfill our every whim do not create true happiness. The Home has taken away the Hadleys’ sense of *purpose*: they want to feel like they belong in the world, and in order to belong in the world they must feel like they matter, which requires that there be work that they have to do.

Summary Part 5:

The Hadley parents eat dinner without their children, who are at a carnival. As [**George**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/characters/george-hadley) watches the dining table make food, he reflects that it would be good for the children to live without the [**nursery**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/symbols/the-nursery) for some time. “Too much of anything isn’t good for anyone,” he thinks. The nursery uses the “telepathic emanations” of the children’s minds to create scenes that fulfill their desires. They can conjure anything up in the nursery. In George’s opinion, [**Wendy**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/characters/wendy-hadley) and [**Peter**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/characters) have been spending too much time in Africa. The animals in the [**veldt**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/symbols/the-veldt) devour their prey right before his children’s eyes. George reflects that it is never too early for a child to think about death; in fact, they wish death on others even before they understand what death is. Lost in his thoughts, he walks to the nursery and listens to a lion’s roar, which is followed by a scream.

Analysis Part 5:

George’s reflection that the children have been spending too much time in the nursery raises the notion that Wendy and Peter might be addicted to their technology. And in this case, George recognizes that the nursery is especially dangerous because it gives the children so much power with so little responsibility. He realizes that the veldt is an expression of his children’s darkest thoughts. George understands that it is natural for children to wish death or destruction on others, before they even know the consequences of such a wish, but fears that Wendy and Peter, by playing out their thoughts of death in the nursery, might reinforce this natural predisposition in a way that leads toward actual violence. The lion’s roar and the subsequent scream seem at the moment to indicate that his concerns are accurate (later it will be revealed that his concerns are accurate but also have come too late).

Summary Part 6:

[**George**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/characters/george-hadley) enters the [**nursery**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/symbols/the-nursery) and reminisces about the past imaginary worlds his children created. But this new world is unbearably hot and cruel. The children’s fantasy world, he reflects, is becoming “a bit too real.” Alone in the [**veldt**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/symbols/the-veldt), he can look back and see through the open door of the nursery: through the door he sees his wife, “like a framed picture,” eating dinner. In front of him, lions are eating their own dinner and watching him. George tells them to go away, but they don’t budge. He tries to send out thoughts of Aladdin to get the nursery walls to change, but nothing happens. Frustrated, George goes back to the dinner table and says the nursery is broken; it won’t respond to his thoughts. The parents hypothesize that the room is stuck as a veldt because the children have been thinking about Africa so often, or that [**Peter**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/characters) has set the nursery to remain in veldt mode.

Analysis Part 6:

The children’s transition from scenes of Aladdin to the African veldt signals a loss of innocence, a loss that is perhaps brought about more quickly by their addiction to the nursery and the responsibility-less power it gives them. Furthermore, George’s inability to change the walls of the nursery implies that the situation is slipping beyond his control. The open door that captures Lydia “like a framed picture” is a crucial image. It gives us a view of reality from the perspective of virtual reality. Bradbury describes the view using words that imply artifice: reality is presented in the same way as a painting or a movie. This further blurs the lines between reality and the nursery’s “artificial reality”, and suggests that reality depends on where you stand. The image also presents a neat juxtaposition between a human eating and of the lions feeding, another commentary on the fundamental animal-ness or savageness of human instincts and desires.

Summary Part 7:

[**Wendy**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/characters/wendy-hadley) and [**Peter**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/characters) return home. [**George**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/characters/george-hadley) asks them about Africa, and the children feign ignorance, insisting they haven’t created an African [**veldt**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/symbols/the-veldt). Wendy runs to the [**nursery**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/symbols/the-nursery), and when she comes back, announces that there is no Africa. The four Hadleys walk together to the nursery and see a beautiful forest. George, suspicious, sends the children to bed. He walks through the scenery and picks up something in the corner of the nursery, where he observed the lions earlier. It’s one of his old wallets, chewed up and bloody. George closes and locks the nursery door.

Analysis Part 7:

The Hadley children are shameless in their manipulation of their parents. At the same time, Bradbury’s description of them makes them appear almost robotic. All of their actions and utterances are described in unison: one can imagine them speaking together in a flat, emotionless voice. The Hadley’s appear to live perfect lives in their Happylife Home, but in truth the parents feel useless, while the children are un-feeling. The bloody wallet is another hint of what the children have been up to – a hint George seems to at least partly understand when he locks the nursery door.

Summary Part 8:

[**George**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/characters/george-hadley) and [**Lydia**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/characters/lydia-hadley) can’t sleep. They agree that [**Wendy**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/characters/wendy-hadley) changed the [**nursery**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/symbols/the-nursery) from a [**veldt**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/symbols/the-veldt) to a forest to try to fool them. They don’t know why, but George is determined to keep the nursery locked until they find out. They reflect that the nursery is supposed to help children express and cure their neuroses, but that perhaps it is not having the desired effect. They decide to discipline their spoiled children, agreeing that Wendy and [**Peter**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/characters) have become disrespectful and disobedient. They hear two screams from the nursery, and then a roar of lions. Apparently, Wendy and Peter have broken into the nursery. Lydia thinks that the screams sound eerily familiar, but isn’t sure how. George and Lydia are unable to fall asleep for another hour, when their beds finally succeed in rocking them to sleep.

Analysis Part 8:

George and Lydia’s assessment of their children is essentially accurate; but, at the same time, the parents don’t recognize the extent of the issue. The fact that Wendy and Peter have so easily broken back into the nursery, and that George and Lydia don’t even try to do anything about it, demonstrates how little power the parents actually have over their children. George and Lydia’s rocking beds further infantilize them—they are like babies in a cradle. Meanwhile, the vaguely familiar screams produced by the nursery’s technology establish a haunting tone, which George and Lydia’s technological infantilization helps them ignore. Technology within the story is both the problem and the cure, which might be the definition of any addiction.

Summary Part 9:

In the next scene, [**Peter**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/characters) has a conversation with his father. He never looks at his father or mother any more; instead, he looks at his feet. He admits that he and [**Wendy**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/characters/wendy-hadley) have been creating the [**veldt**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/symbols/the-veldt) in the [**nursery**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/symbols/the-nursery), and asks [**George**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/characters/george-hadley) not to turn off the nursery. When George reveals that he and [**Lydia**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/characters/lydia-hadley) are considering turning the **[Happylife Home](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/symbols/the-happylife-home)** off for a month, Peter becomes upset at the idea of tying his own shoes and brushing his own teeth. He says that he doesn’t want to do anything except “look and listen and smell.” He tells his father that he’d better not shut off the Home, and returns to the African veldt.

Analysis Part 9:

The fact that Peter does not look at his father illustrates how estranged the children are from their parents, and from human interaction in general. Peter does not seem to feel any kind of love or care for his father; he goes so far as to threaten George’s life. Peter’s wish to do nothing except “look and listen and smell” demonstrates once again how the Happylife Home has reduced the Hadley family to beings who are both passive consumers of entertainment and animal-like in their interests. The overstimulation of the nursery has made Peter care only about continuing to stimulate his senses (look, listen, smell). He doesn’t want to think, love, share; he wants to interact with the technology that gives him instant gratification, not with other people.

Summary Part 10:

[**George**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/characters/george-hadley) and [**Lydia**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/characters/lydia-hadley) invite their friend, psychologist [**David McClean**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/characters), to examine the [**nursery**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/symbols/the-nursery). David observes that the [**veldt**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/symbols/the-veldt) doesn’t “feel good.” A psychologist, he says, works based on feeling, not hard fact. And the nursery is giving him a bad feeling. He advises George to destroy the room and send the children to him for treatment. The nursery was originally developed so that psychologists could study children’s minds, but in this case, he says, the room has become a dangerous channel for the children’s destructive thoughts. He remarks that George has turned from a “Santa Claus” into a “Scrooge.” First he spoiled the children by purchasing the **[Happylife Home](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/symbols/the-happylife-home)**; then he allowed them to become dependent on it. Now, he is functionally taking away their new mother and father. The lions begin to make David nervous. George asks if the lions could actually become real, and David says no. Before leaving the room, David finds a bloody scarf that belongs to [**Lydia**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/characters/lydia-hadley). Together, the men turn off the nursery.

Analysis Part 10:

David McClean’s assertion that psychologists work based on feeling contrasts with the unfeeling nature of the two Hadley children and suggests Bradbury’s fear that technology robs humans of feeling and empathy, of what makes people human. McClean’s description of the family’s dynamics paints the Happylife Home as being even better than having parents in the sense that eating donuts all day is even better than having healthy food: the Happylife Home gives the children whatever they want and will never say no. The original usage of the nursery to study the human mind reinforces the idea that the veldt the children have produces is a true reflection of human nature. It also implies that this technology could have productive and revolutionary applications, but that in a consumerist culture, it merely becomes an addictive form of entertainment.

Summary part 11:

In response to the nursery getting turned off, Wendy and [**Peter**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/characters) become extremely upset and throw a fit. Upset at her children’s crying, [**Lydia**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/characters/lydia-hadley) begs [**George**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/characters/george-hadley) to turn the [**nursery**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/symbols/the-nursery) back on for a little longer. George refuses, and proceeds to go around the house turning off the other automated elements of the **[Happylife Home](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/symbols/the-happylife-home)**. The house becomes as silent as a cemetery. Peter, desperate, tells George that he wishes George were dead. George replies that they have all been dead, but will start to really live now. But upon further entreaty, he agrees to let the children use the nursery one last time before David arrives to help them move out of the house for their vacation.

Analysis Part 11:

That Bradbury describes the Happylife Home as a “cemetery” after George turns it off suggests that the Happylife Home, when it was on, had a life of its own. The interaction between Peter and George highlights the familial conflict created by the intense technology of the house, a conflict that actually presents opposite sides of the same coin: Peter chooses technology over his father, while George finds the technology deadening because it steals from him his purpose, his fatherhood. That George then lets his children use the nursery one last time indicates that he doesn’t think that Peter actually *means* he wants George dead. He thinks, rather, that his son is metaphorically expressing his deep anger. He doesn’t understand the depth of his son’s estrangement from the family and from other people.

Summary Part 12:

[**Lydia**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/characters/lydia-hadley) and the children go to the nursery while [**George**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/characters/george-hadley) gets dressed. Lydia also comes to get dressed, and together they reflect on their foolishness—they should never have bought the Happylife Home! They then hear [**Wendy**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/characters/wendy-hadley) and [**Peter**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/characters) calling for them. George and Lydia run into the nursery, into the [**veldt**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/symbols/the-veldt), but their children aren’t inside. Then the door of the nursery slams shut, trapping George and Lydia in the veldt. The parents realize that their children have set a trap. As they bang against the door, they hear the sounds of approaching lions on all sides. They scream, and suddenly realize that the screams they have been hearing in the nursery were their own.

Analysis Part 12:

The “genius” of the Happylife Home has so completely eclipsed George and Lydia’s roles as parents that it has destroyed the Hadley family: the children have no family feeling at all for their parents, or for people in general. Wendy and Peter, without any remorse, murder their parents in the nursery. In the process, virtual reality becomes full-on reality, which seems like just a final step since, to Wendy and Peter, the nursery is much more real and exciting than reality itself. The children renounce reality—and their parents—in favor of technology. This outcome also speaks to the insidiousness of technology: George and Lydia were worrying about what technology was *doing* to their children, not realizing what it had *already done*.

Summary Part 13:

Some time later, [**David**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/characters) arrives at the [**nursery**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/symbols/the-nursery) doorway, and sees [**Wendy**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/characters/wendy-hadley) and [**Peter**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/characters) eating a picnic in a glade. Beyond them is the [**veldt**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/symbols/the-veldt). David, feeling the heat of the sun, starts sweating. He asks the children where [**George**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/characters/george-hadley) and [**Lydia**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/characters/lydia-hadley) are, and the children reply that they’ll be coming soon. In the distance, David sees lions eating. He looks harder as the lions move over to a watering hole to quench their thirst. David sees the shadows of vultures approaching from above. In the quiet of the veldt, Wendy offers David a cup of tea.

Analysis Part 13:

The heat of the veldt, which reflects the savageness of human nature, contrasts starkly with the civilized tea that Wendy and Peter enjoy in the glade. The end of this story signals the end of a generation and the birth of a new one: a generation in which selfishness, cruelty, and a lack of emotion (induced by excessive technology) supplant the love, care, and understanding that are crucial to our shared humanity. Though they appear civilized, Wendy and Peter are just two more savage animals in the technology-enabled veldt.

Themes:

“The Veldt” portrays a futuristic society in which things, especially consumer goods, have gained a life of their own. In the name of convenience and contentment, technology fulfills people’s every need, reducing humans to passive beings who only eat, breathe, and sleep. Bradbury, who wrote this story in 1950, was responding to the post-World War II consumer culture that was rapidly developing as the U.S. economy boomed. It’s remarkable how closely his extrapolation of American culture at that time resembles our world today. In 2015, motion-sensing lights and doors exist in every developing city. More sophisticated technologies have replaced human labor in the job market. In other words, “The Veldt” satirizes a consumerist culture that has since grown to fulfill much of its author’s prophecy.

In the story, the Hadleys are coddled by the technology in their **[HappyLife Home](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/symbols/the-happylife-home)**, so much so that they begin to feel dependent on it. One might argue that this dependence becomes a kind of addiction. Through the Happylife Home, the Hadleys have all of their needs and desires at their fingertips. But they (and especially their children) can no longer imagine life without a mechanical mediator enhancing every experience. [**Lydia**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/characters/lydia-hadley), the mother, is the first to view the Happylife Home as a threat. She begins to feel “unnecessary,” and wants to experience the sensation of performing normal human tasks once again, so she suggests that they take a “vacation” and shut off the Home for some time. The mechanization of life makes the Hadley parents not only feel useless, but also inhuman. Without their daily routines to perform, they find that the Happylife Home has taken away the purpose and, therefore, the joy of their lives. George refers to the family as having “mechanical, electronic navels,” and implies that they are not truly living when under the influence of the Happylife Home.

The assumption that convenience leads to happiness is one of the story’s major critiques of the consumerist, technological society that it depicts. The Happylife Home, which does everything for the Hadleys, including cutting their food, is designed with the belief that making life easier—so easy that its residents don’t have to lift a finger—will make those residents happier individuals. This assumption posits technology as the answer to many of our “first-world” concerns. But in “The Veldt,” we see the Happylife Home have the opposite effect on the Hadley family. Instead of feeling happier and more fulfilled, the parents experience their lives drained of meaning as they essentially cease to be necessary as parents. The children, for their part, don’t even understand that their lives have lost so much meaning. They are so dependent on the Happylife Home that their own parents—that relationships to other people in general—are rendered valueless to them.

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| **“Too Real” RealityTheme Analysis** | **[Next](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/themes/human-nature)**  [Human Nature](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/themes/human-nature) |

Themes and Colors

**[[Consumer Culture and Technology Theme Icon](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/themes/consumer-culture-and-technology)](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/themes/consumer-culture-and-technology)**

**[[“Too Real” Reality Theme Icon](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/themes/too-real-reality)](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/themes/too-real-reality)**

**[[Human Nature Theme Icon](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/themes/human-nature)](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/themes/human-nature)**

**[[Death of the Family Theme Icon](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/themes/death-of-the-family)](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/themes/death-of-the-family)**

LitCharts assigns a color and icon to each theme in *The Veldt*, which you can use to track the themes throughout the work.



In Bradbury’s story, virtual reality has powerfully altered the Hadley family’s perception of reality. In the Happylife Home, this technology takes the form of a “[**nursery**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/symbols/the-nursery)”, a room for the Hadleys’ children that immerses them in any scene the can imagine. For the children [**Wendy**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/characters/wendy-hadley) and [**Peter**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/characters), the power of virtual reality reaches the point where they would much rather interact with the nursery than with the real world. As [**George**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/characters/george-hadley) points out, “They live for the nursery.” So much so, in fact, that they kill their parents in order to keep using it.

Bradbury’s nursery presents us with a paradox. In “The Veldt,” the Hadley children are completely dependent on the nursery. As the psychologist in the story, [**David McClean**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/characters), comments, the nursery has become their new mother and father. Yet within its walls, the nursery grants them a frightening amount of power. Able to create anything they can imagine, they are essentially little gods. But these are gods without morals: the story strongly implies that the children use the nursery to kill their parents. But some questions linger, unanswered. How conscious are Wendy and Peter of the severity of their actions? Has virtual reality dulled their sense of real consequence?

“The Veldt” raises important questions about reality that are most pressing today, as companies are actually developing vivid renderings of virtual reality. What should our relationship to this kind of technology be? Will virtual reality actually become powerful enough to trick us into thinking that it’s completely real (think The Matrix)? If so, will we lose control? And how far should we let our imaginations run? Perhaps there are certain ideas in our heads that should remain in our heads. The phrase “too real,” which occurs several times in this story, is loaded with these concerns. The power of the nursery gives George and [**Lydia**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/characters/lydia-hadley) a sense of unease; they come to realize that they cannot distinguish between virtual reality and their reality. Virtual reality becomes *too* real to be virtual; indeed, it ultimately becomes reality itself. The blurry line between the Hadleys’ experiences and the experiences generated by the nursery forces the reader to ask the question: if a machine-generated world is just as real as our own world, what meaning does our own world have?

The phrase “too real” also implies a culture of overstimulation that plagues society. It is perhaps the incredible vividness and intensity of the nursery that makes the Hadley children unable to enjoy the real world any longer. Like a drug, the nursery demands that one get high on images, on fantasies, and remain that way. Bradbury wrote this story in a time when television was exposing its first generation of consumers to image and information overload. Today, it is not only easy to imagine but almost impossible *not*to see a child’s or adult’s eyes peeled to a screen of some sort, oblivious to what is going on around them. This overstimulation—and the resulting need for even more overstimulation—leads Peter to say: “I don’t want to do anything but look and listen and smell; what else is there to do?” But, as the reader knows, there *are* other things to do, things that make people human: thinking, caring, and loving, among others.

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| **Human NatureTheme Analysis** | **[Next](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/themes/death-of-the-family)**  [Death of the Family](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/themes/death-of-the-family) |

Themes and Colors

**[[Consumer Culture and Technology Theme Icon](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/themes/consumer-culture-and-technology)](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/themes/consumer-culture-and-technology)**

**[[“Too Real” Reality Theme Icon](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/themes/too-real-reality)](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/themes/too-real-reality)**

**[[Human Nature Theme Icon](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/themes/human-nature)](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/themes/human-nature)**

**[[Death of the Family Theme Icon](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/themes/death-of-the-family)](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/themes/death-of-the-family)**

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The **[Happylife Home](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/symbols/the-happylife-home)** is Bradbury’s futuristic vision of technology nearing its zenith. It may seem strange, then, that the predominant image in the story is that of an African [**veldt**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/symbols/the-veldt). The juxtaposition between advanced technology and this quintessential image of nature merits investigation. Technology and Nature are usually imagined as polar opposites. The development of technology, we might say, has allowed us to become masters of nature. In “The Veldt,” the [**nursery**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/symbols/the-nursery) allows the Hadley children to create any environment imaginable. In an interesting twist, though, Bradbury shows that the power of the nursery’s technology actually becomes a conduit for the expression of basic human nature.

It is significant that [**Wendy**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/characters/wendy-hadley) and [**Peter**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/characters) repeatedly imagine a barren landscape populated by vultures and menacing lions. The veldt is an emanation from their minds that aims to fulfill their desire—the death of their parents. [**George**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/characters/george-hadley) reflects that the children are too young to think about death, but then corrects himself: “Or, no, you were never too young, really. Long before you knew what death was you were wishing it on someone else.” [**David McClean**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/characters) confirms the children’s fascination with death when he observes that the nursery, instead of providing the children with a fantastic diversion, has “become a channel toward destructive thoughts.” The psychologist’s diagnosis of the nursery implies that the veldt represents deep and dark tendencies in the Hadley children. Bradbury may be referencing the psychoanalytic theories of Sigmund Freud, who believed that children had unconscious drives to have sex with and kill their parents. Here, of course, the latter wins over, as George and [**Lydia**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/characters/lydia-hadley), without realizing it, hear the children rehearsing their parents’ violent deaths over and over again in the nursery.

Bradbury’s depiction of human nature has moral as well as psychological implications. Bradbury wrote “The Veldt” shortly after World War II, when the public was intensely concerned about the implications of the Holocaust. What did the atrocities of the war imply about human nature? In the 1960s, Stanley Milgram would conduct a famous psychology experiment that showed that humans were quite willing to inflict a significant amount of pain on other human beings. It appeared that human nature was more amoral than most would like to think. “The Veldt” appears to reflect on human nature in a similar way. The Hadley children, having killed their parents, do not seem emotional about it at all. In fact, they act like civilized people, drinking tea, having accomplished their goal. Bradbury wants us to ask ourselves what we would do if we had complete control over a technology like the nursery. Would we be as selfish and destructive as the Hadley children?

The veldt pictured in the nursery can ultimately be read as a mirror of the barrenness that life is reduced to in the mechanization of humanity. You might expect the most advanced technology in the house to look sophisticated, but the opposite is true. Bradbury gives us a glimpse of the loneliness, savagery, and meaninglessness that has governed human history and that may be even more palpable today. Underneath all the sophistication, we are still animals, as viciously human as ever.

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| **Death of the FamilyTheme Analysis** | **[Next](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/quotes)**  [Quotes](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/quotes) |

On the most basic level, “The Veldt” is about a family going through the typical problems that arise in family life. **[George](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/characters/george-hadley)** and [**Lydia**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/characters/lydia-hadley) are parents who spoil their children, and then try to discipline them by taking away the toys they originally spoiled them with. In response, [**Wendy**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/characters/wendy-hadley) and [**Peter**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/characters) begin to hate their parents. The difference between the Hadleys and a real family is that the Hadley children’s toys are much more powerful than the toys that children usually play with. Eventually, the children’s hatred ends in a rebellion and their parents’ death. Bradbury’s story is a study in how technology disrupts normal family relations.

George and Lydia want the best for their children. So they purchase the **[Happylife Home](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/symbols/the-happylife-home)**, a home designed to make Peter and Wendy happy and fulfilled. Indeed, it does its job, but it does that job too well. George and Lydia become concerned about their role as parents in the Happylife Home; they feel as if they’re being phased out by their technology. As David McClean says, they have let the Happylife Home become more important to the children than their own parents. In a normal household, parents in this situation might be able to fix their family troubles. But in this case, Peter and Wendy are so obsessed with the [**nursery**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-veldt/symbols/the-nursery) that they would rather kill their parents than part with it. Their new reality far surpasses a reality in which their dreams never come true. And the technology is so powerful that George and Lydia can’t compete with it. You can confiscate a video game, but not the nursery: it will find a way to get rid of you.

Perhaps George and Lydia are bad parents. On the other hand, perhaps consumer technology is just too powerful and addictive. Bradbury’s story might as well describe today’s culture, in which children and parents alike watch TV during dinner, text message during conversations, and are constantly distracted by their technology. One would rather be in front of a screen than another human being.

To Bradbury, the power of technology spells the end of family, and the end of meaningful human relations. If everyone has a nursery to create his or her own world, there may no longer be any need to have real conversations, to foster real relationships, with real people, in the shared, real world. In portraying the destruction of the Hadley family, Bradbury is voicing a fear that the consumerist world we are building will result in the destruction of the very idea of family and all of the values—love, respect, loyalty, companionship—that make possible our humanity.