1. Self-Assessment Essay

The Importance and Intricacies of Writing Well

As author William H. Gass observed, “true alchemists do not change lead into gold; they change the world into words”. Gass' assessment that the real magicians of the world are those souls who possess the ability to capture the world with a pen and paper is both insightful and accurate. All around us, the world is brimming with ideas, experiences, and adventures that find longevity in the musings of writers. Whether the writer’s work be a research paper, an essay, a novel, a play, a poem, a song, or something in between, it is through writing that all of these things are captured permanently. Therefore, writing is one of the most gratifying activities, for it allows and requires the author to observe the world around them as they collect information, synthesize ideas, and share their findings in order to get their point across.

Good writers knows that research is an essential part of any piece, whether it be a research paper, an argumentative essay, or even a fictional story. As I composed source 2, an argumentative essay about Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*, I exercised the research skills that I have developed by paying close attention to diction, dialogue, and descriptions in order to unearth the themes, tones, and ideas that they conveyed. While I read the novel, I made note of quotes, pages, and sections that I would later use in my paper. As I wrote the essay, I incorporated many of these excerpts as both direct quotes and paraphrases. Ensuring to give credit where it was due and to use the quotes in context, I often let Bradbury's words speak for themselves, using his words rather than my own variation of them to portray the feelings and ideas that he desired to express.

As I composed source 2, I did my best to show integrity for Bradbury's work by keeping his purpose in mind. In the process of developing my argument, I closely examined Bradbury's words and examples, drawing on both the extrinsic proof and the intrinsic proof associated with the novel to prove my points. While arguing that Bradbury utilized characterization and symbolism to portray the importance of individuality, I sought to convey Bradbury's purpose for writing his novel and the arguments that he himself developed. Furthermore, I wrote in such a way that an audience of readers who did and did not read the
novel would be provided with enough detail to understand the events and examples of the novel and how they come together to prove the argument to be true.

Research plays a vital role in the development of ethos, for a statement void of fact is void of impact. I have learned through personal experience that researching a topic of interest is a wonderful way to learn new skills, to develop new ideas and ways of thinking, and to improve my credibility as a writer. In my research, as is showcased in Source 3, I honed in on a topic that has always interested me: time. Time is a very complex and multi-faceted entity that has roots in almost every aspect of our lives. In order to learn more about this all-encompassing topic, I needed to decide what aspects of time I wanted to research further. After looking at a variety of sources, the main one being Mitch Albom’s novel *The Timekeeper*, I began to select the facts and concepts that became the basis of my research.

It is through this initial source that I discovered which directions I sought to branch off into, and it became a gateway to my subsequent sources. Each utilized source brought with it new ideas and facts that enhanced my overall paper and perception of time. During the selection process, each source was checked for its credibility and quality of information, and I made sure to find a variety of types of sources, ranging from books to websites to magazine articles to podcasts. Collecting a variety of sources with different and reliable information was an essential part in the development of my research paper. Treating each selected source with integrity was also vital, as I made sure to give credit where it is due. Furthermore, each source that I referenced and used as a major stepping stone has been recorded in my Works Cited page. Each source played a major role in the development of my paper, which would not have been possible without extensive research.

More often than not, writing requires one to delve deeper into topics through research. As I worked on each source in this portfolio, I learned firsthand that in the process of researching, the writer learns a myriad of new information while simultaneously ensuring accuracy in their arguments and reports. It is through research that writers enable themselves to explore areas of interest more thoroughly while developing ethos. By fact-checking and synthesizing information collected from a variety of sources,
writers develop the ability to demonstrate both information literacy skills and critical reading skills through research. Research, however, is only a part of the overall picture. In order to truly create a unique and enriching piece of writing, one must synthesize fact with original thought.

Differences in thoughts, experiences, and ideas tend to foster variety, allowing people such as writers to view the world through different lenses. These lenses can be used effectively to express different perspectives, therefore enlightening the audience as a whole. Armed with the tools to display a work in a new light, authors have the ability to share their different points of view with a broader audience. Thanks to the internet, social media, and various other digital fields, there are abundant avenues with which one can communicate important discoveries, thoughts, and ideas through different forms of writing.

In this day and age, writing can take on a myriad of identities. With the internet and an abundance of other resources, authors can express their opinions, ideas, and desires through multiple different avenues within writing. I have learned through personal experience that utilizing a form of writing beyond a paper and pen offers a great opportunity for growth for both the author and the audience. As the author, using a different form of writing allows a freedom with creativity that in turn can positively impact the quality and message of the piece as a whole. On the other hand, the audience may be better suited to connect with and remember a unique piece of writing that shares information in an intriguing manner.

In both Source 4a and 4b, I sought to do just that, opting to present my analysis, ideas, and opinions through a glogster and a video, respectively. Each piece was originally done in connection with my junior theme project, a year-long assignment during my junior year of high school that required each student to pick a theme and explore its relevance, prevalence, and implications within a variety of different forms of writing. After collecting evidence and forming opinions, we were required to share our findings through our own variety of pieces, including a glogster pertaining to a book and a final video that synthesized and explained our findings as a whole regarding our theme in literature. My theme was loyalty and betrayal, and through my extensive research, I learned a great deal about the blurred lines between the two. I then utilized these digital tools to show a new perspective and communicate my findings to a larger and more
varied audience. By using these digital tools to portray my findings, I was able to incorporate my ideas and analysis in new, interesting ways. Furthermore, it allowed me to make connections more easily, for when I wanted to cite a music video, a book, a movie, or a historical figure, I could easily attach links or pictures to my piece, making for a much more convenient, interactive, and insightful piece of writing.

As with every piece of writing, the sources included in this portfolio gained more insight, depth, and overall quality with each revision. After all, there is always room for improvement. With each source, I edited, revised, and re-worked the pieces in order to make them as high quality as possible. When editing each source, I thoroughly checked the grammar, spelling, and overall English conventions to ensure that they made the most sense possible. In addition, I edited each piece in order to make them stronger by either adding more details where needed or taking out repetitive phrases in order to make each work more concise. After all, a first draft should never be a final draft.

Every piece of writing is unique, no matter what form it takes. Whether one writes an essay, a research paper, a novel, a song, a poem, a play, a video, or something in between, each piece of writing requires the author to conduct research, synthesize fact with opinion, and edit extensively in order to expand their horizon and capture the world accurately. Authors truly are the real magicians of the world, for they possess the admirable ability to observe and capture the world from multiple perspectives and in multiple forms. These authors leave a permanent mark on the world as they prove that any person can became a true alchemist if only they grab a pen and paper.
2. Analysis Paper

*The Missing Piece*

“*We have everything we need to be happy, but we aren’t happy. Something’s missing.*” (Bradbury 82). In his novel *Fahrenheit 451*, author Ray Bradbury expresses his belief that “the whole culture’s shot through. The skeleton needs melting and reshaping” (Bradbury 87). Bradbury sought to juxtapose the irresponsible traits advocated by society with the honesty and happiness of those who went against society’s values in order to incite change and steer readers toward true happiness. He employs a myriad of symbols and characters to demonstrate that it is worthwhile to go against the mindless majority, and he employs characters who depict different facets of society to showcase the superiority of the individual. Bradbury utilizes symbolism and characterization in order to persuade readers that true happiness will abound only when society embraces individuality, appreciates reality, and advocates a fair distribution of power.

Power is everything, and how that power is distributed dictates the way society is run. In the novel, the firemen have ultimate control. The head fireman, Captain Beatty, controls both the firemen and the direction of society. Bradbury uses the character of Captain Beatty to demonstrate the wayward direction society takes when power is abused. According to Beatty, firemen are “custodians of our peace of mind, the focus of our understandable and rightful dread of being inferior; official censors, judges and executors” (Bradbury 58) who “stand against the small tide of those who want to make everyone unhappy with conflicting theory and thought” (Bradbury 62). They abuse their status as heroes by “protecting” society from options and free thought in order to keep the public subordinate. By eliminating books and murdering those who own them, the corrupt firemen make people “happy” by feeding the public lies and giving them no options to be different. By utilizing these methods, the firemen maintain power and keep themselves securely in
charge of a society that faces few threats of a coup because everyone is “happy”. Captain Beatty justifies this fake reality by preaching that,

   *If you don’t want a man unhappy politically, don’t give him two sides to a question to worry him; give him one. Better yet, give him none...If the government is inefficient, top-heavy and tax-mad, better it be all those than that people worry over it. Don’t give them any slippery stuff like philosophy or sociology to tie things up with. That way lies melancholy.* (61)

Beatty uses his authority and his knowledge of literature to manipulate others, such as the transforming Montag. When Captain Beatty realizes that Montag is questioning society and the ways in which books are regarded, Beatty does his best to manipulate texts in a way that will force Montag to accept the dangers that books present. Books, “where we stored a lot of things we were afraid we might forget” (Bradbury 82), also “show the pores in the face of life” (Bradbury 83). Books symbolize power and knowledge, and thus Beatty twists books and their messages to remove power from the people and to keep his own corrupt authority in charge.

Authority’s corruption in the novel is aided by fear as well as manipulation. Captain Beatty and the firemen have no tolerance for individuals; they do what they can to make everyone the same, so they can eliminate any and all threats to their corrupt authority. Clarisse, a symbol of curiosity and a character who has found true happiness by questioning and experiencing things for herself, encounters this intolerance of authority. During one of her many fruitful conversations with Montag, she informs him that, “the others [firemen] would walk off and leave me talking. Or threaten me” (Bradbury 23) if she were to think about and question the world around her in front of them. Clarisse recognizes that the authority of the firemen is often abused and that they, along with the rest of society, treat her in a hostile manner because she yearns to do more than sit in a
parlor all day. Though she sees that “so many people are. Afraid of firemen, I mean” (Bradbury 7), she is not fearful of them. Her boldness and lack of fear present an immense threat to their unaccepting society and to the authority of the firemen, who feel she and other individuals must be subdued or handled in a harsh and definitive manner. Her own uncle, who was an individual, “drove slowly on a highway once and they jailed him for two days” (Bradbury 8). When the firemen burned down the home of a man who had a library, he was carried “screaming off to the asylum” not because he was actually insane, but because “any man’s insane who thinks he can fool the government and us” (Bradbury 33). Therefore, firemen and police officers alike abuse their authority in order to keep people subordinate and ignorant. Their policy, “don’t face a problem, burn it” (Bradbury 121), highlights the abuse they get away with, by murdering or setting the Hound lose on problematic individuals. The Hound, a symbol of violence, is another vehicle utilized by the firemen in order to strike fear into the hearts of any citizen who begins to question society. All the Hound knows is what the corrupt firemen want it to know: “hunting and finding and killing” (Bradbury 27). The Hound is fearfully regarded and has a reputation of never failing. Its broadcast success and inhumane manner of killing is enough to keep any would-be individuals at bay for fear of being the Hound’s next victim. The Hound is a very effective tool for the firemen; after all, the firemen and Captain Beatty belong to the “most dangerous enemy to truth and freedom, the solid unmoving cattle of the majority” (Bradbury 108).

No matter the setting or time period, majority is always synonymous with conformity. In the novel, the only people who fit in within society are selfish conformists, such as Mildred and her friends. In the “age of the disposable tissue” (Bradbury 18), everyone is encouraged to be the exact same. As the corrupt Captain Beatty explains, “we must all be alike. Not everyone born free and equal, as the Constitution says, but everyone made equal. Each man the image of every other;
then all are happy” (Bradbury 58). In a world where everyone is the same, in which no one is different, there is no reason to be envious of anyone else, no reason to think and no reason to go against society and be an individual. That way, everyone accepts society and fails to see the error and corruption that run rampant. Instead, everyone (or at least the mindless majority) is content with the way things are. By doing away with books and thus with knowledge, society puts an emphasis on conforming to a standard in which each person’s world revolves around “that favourite subject, Myself” (Bradbury 72). In this world, “there are billions of us and that’s too many. Nobody knows anyone” (Bradbury 16), and, “nobody says anything different from anyone else” (Bradbury 31). Because of the way society grooms the mindless majority, none of them truly know anything save what they are told on their televisions. They are all tricked into believing that they are happy, and none of them have anything truly worthwhile to talk about. They are bonded by their environment, identical experiences, and their lack of desire to truly know anything or anyone save the lies they are fed by their televisions and society as a whole. Mildred and her friends all repeat one another and talk about nothing but the latest TV shows, and they, along with the rest of society, do not think for themselves. The women spend all day in their parlors, watching their televisors and experiencing a fake reality. The televisor, a symbol of conformity:


tells you what to think and blasts it in. It must be right. It seems so right. It rushes you on so quickly to its own conclusions your mind hasn’t time to protest. Televisors and books symbolize that great struggle between individuality and conformity; after all, ”you can shut them [books], say, 'Hold on a moment.' You play God to it. But who has ever torn himself from the claw that encloses you when you drop a seed in a TV parlor? It grows you any shape it wishes! (84)
The manipulative tevisor succeeds in sucking all individuality out of the user and replaces it with a universal, uncontroversial point of view the mindless majority eagerly adopts.

Parlors and society as a whole encourage conformity and enjoying life without paying attention to details. Ten million men are being mobilized for a war? “Say one million. It’s happier” (Bradbury 92). Instead of disturbing society’s happiness with unpleasant details, those in charge lie about the details and take the public’s attention to other things, such as the latest TV programs or driving at 90 miles an hour. This fast-paced, distracted lifestyle leads to a dangerous level of ignorance that results in a lack of appreciation for the wonders of life. Curiosity becomes rare, kept alive only by characters like Clarisse and Montag. Clarisse contemplates and determines that "drivers sometimes don’t know what grass is, or flowers, because they never see them slowly...If you showed a driver a green blur, Oh yes! he’d say, that’s grass! A pink blur! That’s a rose garden!" (Bradbury 9). She notices that people don’t say anything worthwhile and that they fail to appreciate life. She goes out and does the opposite, and finds true happiness in questioning, exploring and trying everything once. In creating her own unique experiences, Clarisse demonstrates that being an individual is beneficial and leads to knowledge, happiness, and risks. Everyone else, however, is not willing to take these risks and prefer to retreat to the security of their fake happiness. After all, in a world where authority and televisors “whirl man’s mind around about so fast that the centrifuge flings off all unnecessary, time-wasting thought” (Bradbury 55), “life is immediate, the job counts, pleasure lies all about after work”, and nobody has any need to learn anything save “pressing buttons, pulling switches, fitting nuts and bolts” (Bradbury 56). In essence, the conformist majority are “happy” because they do not have to make decisions or think, and they live in a world of security and guarantees. The small minority of curious misfits who put the needs of society before their own, however, choose to live in a world where nothing is
guaranteed. Their leader, Granger, implores his peers to “ask no guarantees, ask for no security, there never was such an animal. And if there were, it would be related to the great sloth which hangs upside down in a tree all day every day, sleeping its life away” (Bradbury 157). A secure world inspires no excitement, no risks, and no action. Only when one goes out, experiences life, notices the details, and appreciates the world will one experience true happiness in a true reality.

In the novel’s wayward society, acceptance of true reality is blockaded by an unwillingness to accept or acknowledge unpleasant ideas and events. Thus books, which “remind us what asses and fools we are” (Bradbury 86), are outlawed, hated and feared because they “show the pores in the face of life. The comfortable people want only wax moon faces, poreless, hairless, expressionless” (Bradbury 83). Conformists like Mildred and her friend Mrs. Phelps opt to ignore unpleasant thoughts such as death and war. Neither of them pay the oncoming war any mind because it is undesirable. As Faber wisely recognizes, “if you hide your ignorance, no one will hit you and you’ll never learn” (Bradbury 104). Conformists, symbolized by Mildred and Mrs. Phelps, make no attempt to learn anything new or to challenge society. Instead, they choose to maintain their ignorance and forget all undesirable events. They have no emotional connection to anyone save themselves, as Mrs. Phelps displays when comparing caring for her children to doing laundry: “heave them into the ‘parlor’ and turn the switch. It’s like washing clothes: stuff laundry in and slam the lid” (Bradbury 96). She and her current husband show a lack of compassion when she explains her husband saying, "if I get killed off, you just go right ahead and don’t cry, but get married again, and don’t think of me” (Bradbury 95). She doesn’t realize the tragic fact that she and her family have no positive emotional connection because she refuses to see the error of her ways and the regrettable loss of her family to either hate or death. Only when forced to face reality
are people capable of achieving true happiness, yet conformists like Mrs. Phelps shut down rather than accept the truth. This is evident when Montag, in an outrage, tells Mrs. Phelps to:

Go home and think of your first husband divorced and your second husband killed in a jet and your third husband blowing his brains out, go home and think of the dozens of abortions you’ve had, go home and think of that and your damn Caesarian sections too, and your children who hate your guts! Go home and think of how it all happened and what did you ever do to stop it? (Bradbury 101)

Yet even then, Mrs. Phelps refuses to accept the fact that she is at fault for any unpleasantries in her life, and she maintains that she is still happy, even though Montag made her unhappier than she had been in a long time. As Granger, the fearless ex-professor and symbol of true happiness and selflessness, points out, "all of us have photographic memories, but spend a lifetime learning how to block off the things that are really in there" (Bradbury 151). Thus one of the keys to true happiness is lifting the blockade and learning to accept things that are really in there exactly as they are, rather than deny or manipulate unpleasantries as conformists like Mrs. Phelps do.

Montag, the symbol of a conflicted individual groomed in a conformist society, encounters the realm of fake reality vs. true reality in multiple facets of his life. As a result of his interactions with Clarisse, Montag realizes that, "he was not happy...he recognized this as the true state of affairs. He wore his happiness like a mask and the girl had run off across the lawn with the mask and there was no way of going to knock on her door to ask for it back" (Bradbury 12). As soon as he comes to terms with the truth that his happiness has never been real, he discovers that the 'reality' he lives in is not real either. His relationship with Mildred is not real love. Montag has always considered their love to be real, and he had never questioned it. Yet once he begins to realize the errors within society and his own lack of happiness, coupled with Mildred’s sickness
and his inability to connect with her, he comes to terms with the fact that he does not love her. Clarisse aids in this process by displaying her natural clarity; she utilizes a dandelion to open Montag’s eyes and reveal to him that he is not in love. The dandelion, a symbol of love, fails to tell Montag what he wants to hear, yet either way "that awful flower...had summed up everything, hadn’t it? 'What a shame! You’re not in love with anyone!'" (Bradbury 44). Though he tries to convince himself that he is in love, he can't help but realize that, "if she [Mildred] died, he was certain he wouldn’t cry. For it would be the dying of an unknown, a street face...a silly empty man near a silly empty woman" (Bradbury 44). After all, he and Mildred ultimately live in two different realities: she lives in one dictated by her 'family', her parlor and her own selfishness. Meanwhile, Montag slowly but surely realizes the fakeness and emptiness society calls "happiness". He realizes that books are not the evil traitors society makes them out to be, just as fire is not solely destructive. When he finally escapes the horror of the conformity-driven society he was groomed in, he realizes that, "somewhere behind the seven veils of unreality, beyond the walls of parlors and beyond the tin moat of the city" (Bradbury 142), there is a world "more fantastic than any dream made or paid for in factories" (Bradbury 156). In true reality, Montag discovers that his prior beliefs regarding fire and the wilderness were incorrect. As he "was moving from an unreality that was frightening into a reality that was unreal because it was new" (Bradbury 140), he realized that he "had left a stage behind and many actors" (Bradbury 140), as well as many misconceptions and fake happiness. Out in the wilderness, he saw fire, which had been his joy and his purpose in society, in a whole new light, for "he hadn’t known fire could look this way. He had never thought in his life that it could give as well as take" (Bradbury 145-146). Thus fire, like Montag, becomes a symbol of transformation. Fire is one of the many things society misconstrues, transforming it into a scapegoat blocking society's way to "happiness". Yet in reality, it is society
and its own selfishness that prevents true happiness from being attained. Likewise, the failure of society to pay attention to details and the belief that ignoring a problem makes it go away are continued examples of the flawed beliefs Montag discovers when he escapes society. Bradbury expresses the truth that "when we forget how close the wilderness is in the night...someday it will come in and get us, for we will have forgotten how terrible and real it can be" (Bradbury 136). Society forgets about true reality and true happiness. Only when one removes oneself from the unreality (as Montag does) will true happiness be attained. After all, life in the unreal, conformist city is empty. However, being out in the wilderness helps Montag and others realize that, "he was not empty. There was more than enough to fill him. There would always be more than enough" (Bradbury 144). Upon realizing the errors of his conformist ways, Montag forges a new life for himself. Even in name, he was generic, gifted with the name Guy so as to demonstrate his place with the mindless majority. Yet he finds a way to break free from the fakeness of society and to enter the ranks of individuals.

The society of Fahrenheit 451 has an abundance of road blocks preventing true happiness from being attained. Bradbury highlights the ways in which scapegoats are created and individuals are destroyed in order to maintain the corrupt power of authority, as well as the selfishness of the conformist majority and their failure to pay attention to details, think for themselves, and survive in a true reality. The novel's society is dripping with fakeness, mindlessness, and corruption. Bradbury depicts the flaws and evils of this conformist society by illustrating characters that represent different facets of society, including corrupt authority, conformist majority members, and individuals who are on their way to attaining true happiness. Ideas and society's acceptance of them are portrayed through symbolism, in which society's values are revealed. Books and dandelions (representative of free-thought and love) are cast aside to
make way for the Hound, Salamanders, and televisors (symbols of violence, corruption and conformity). Though Montag, one of many characters who double as a symbol, believes that “We have everything we need to be happy, but we aren’t happy. Something’s missing” (Bradbury 82), he is sadly mistaken. More than one necessity to be happy is lacking within society; the oppressive nature and faulty value system must be removed before progress towards true happiness can be made. True happiness will be prevalent only when society embraces individuality, appreciates reality, and advocates a fair distribution of power.
3. Documented, Research-Based Project

It’s Time: A Look into the History of The Interpretations of Time

Consider the word ‘time.’ What is it? Where does it come from? How many ways can it be interpreted? As the Merriam-Webster’s dictionary describes time, it is “the system of those sequential relations that any event has to any other, as past, present, or future; indefinite and continuous duration regarded as that in which events succeed one another.” Time is dependent upon interpretation as to which events occur and in what order, and this one definition does not come close to encompassing all that time is. Time is an industry. It is a desire. It is a burden and a gift. One can kill time, waste time, keep time, save time, and run out of time; there are as many different ways of looking at time as there are minutes in a day. And oddly enough, man is the only creature to keep track of time. As Mitch Albom, author of The Timekeeper, puts it, man is the only creature whose life revolves around the clock, for “birds are not late. A dog does not check its watch. Deer do not fret over passing birthdays. Man alone measures time. Man alone chimes the hour” (Albom 8). Time is all about perception. It is a manmade creation that holds a different meaning and importance for each person in each unique situation; each individual possesses their own perception of time, thus creating the intricate, multi-faceted concept that spans the entirety of human existence.

Time can be perceived in a myriad of ways, yet one of the most common perceptions is personified in the symbol of Father Time. Legend has it that Father Time is the man who first discovered time, and he thus became the master of it. As Albom tells it in his novel, Father Time (also known as Dor) is a man who lived in a world without counting or timekeeping. Six centuries ago, Dor became the first man to count (Albom 101). He discovered the unnatural practice of counting and timekeeping, and continued to create new methods even while being discouraged by the Heavens. After an attempt to charge the Heavens and stop time (an attempt involving the Tower of Babel, an ancient biblical structure that is known as the largest manmade structure ever built), he was banished to a cave to spend eternity listening to the pleas of people
on Earth for more of the thing he discovered: time. He became immune to the very thing he lorded over, for he remained lean, healthy, and young despite the passing of centuries.

However, Albom’s interpretation of Father Time differs greatly from various descriptions that have spanned the ages, especially that of the Ancient Roman deity, Saturn. The concept of Father Time has been around since ancient times, with the Greek’s Titan of Time, Chronos, whose name literally translates to mean “time”, and the Roman’s Diety of Time, Saturn. (“Old Father Time” 1-2). The ancient Greeks and Romans worshipped and revered these figures who became the personification of time. The article “Old Father Time” delves deeper into the legend of Saturn, who is often depicted as an old, bearded, decrepit man holding a curved scythe and an hourglass, representative of the thing he both controls and is a slave to: time. Saturn became the ruler of the Roman Gods, becoming so by utilizing his scythe to castrate his Father, Uranus. In doing so, he simultaneously separated Heaven and Earth, and his scythe came to represent time’s cruelty, for in the end, it cuts all things down. No one, not even Saturn, can escape time’s ultimate effects, and thus he faces defeat at the hands of his children Jupiter, Neptune and Pluto, who represent three things that time itself cannot kill: air, water, and death (“Old Father Time” 3-7). Saturn truly encompasses the beliefs about time’s unrelenting nature as well as its inescapable presence, for he did everything in his power to gain control, yet eventually time took that control (as well as his livelihood) away from him. Saturn appears to differ greatly from the Father Time concocted by Albom. This is thanks to the different ways in which Albom and the Romans perceive time. Beyond the Romans and Albom, other groups and individuals have also created their own views regarding Father Time. But in what other ways has Father Time been presented throughout the years?

Since the time of the ancient Romans, the idea of Father Time has only developed. The original figure of Saturn has been twisted into a mold for both Father Time and the Grim Reaper, who often represents the end of an individual’s time on Earth. This idea developed when, in the seventeenth century, a portrait of Queen Elizabeth contained an image of the Grim Reaper, representing death, on one shoulder, and an old, bearded figure peering over the other. The artist claimed that the idea came to him in a dream
(Albom 39). As the ages have passed, Father Time has become a symbol often depicted in editorial cartoons as an old, haggard, and bearded man with a cane and an hourglass. Around New Years’, cartoonists have a “hay day” with the symbol of Father Time, using him as a symbol of the leaving of the old year and using Baby New Year, a young infant, to symbolize a fresh start with a new year. Yet where did the idea of Father Time juxtaposing Baby New Year come from? An unidentified artist created an etching in the nineteenth-century of Father Time shown as an old, bearded man holding time in the form of Baby New Year in his arms, claiming that the idea came to him in a dream (Albom 40). Yet the idea of Father Time as an old, bedraggled man has experienced a facelift as the decades go on. In 1898, a bearded yet robust man holding a scythe and an hourglass was erected in the form of a bronze sculpture placed over a giant clock. Though the inspiration behind this fit, youthful version of Father Time is unknown, it is clear that the figure is a representation of Father Time. From this point came the idea for Albom’s version of Father Time, a man given the burden of eternal life without the ability to age or to die. The myriad depictions of Father Time over the centuries have developed in the details, yet the core idea of the lord of time has remained the same. Yet has this effect of continuous development of the idea of time been applied to the different methods of measuring time?

Time is perceived beyond just the symbol of Father Time; the perception of time has expanded throughout history as man has attempted to harness and control it. Centuries ago, in ancient times, the first methods of timekeeping were developed. From then on, they have only grown in complexity and accuracy. In the very beginning, man was unconcerned with time, choosing to live life in between sunsets. Yet time soon became “the thing that moved man further from the simple light of existence and deeper into the darkness of his own obsessions” (Albom 57). At some point, man – whether it be Father Time or just an aware individual – realized that there are patterns, and that each day contains moments similar to that of the past day and of the next day. Man began to develop the notion of time.

The earliest methods of telling time revolved around tracking the movement of the sun, moon and stars. The science of timekeeping involving objects used to track this movement originated from the ancient
Egyptians, who began by building obelisks (Barksdale 1). The first obelisks, which are tall, rectangular structures possessing a pointed tip and typically covered in hieroglyphs, were erected around 3500 B.C. in specific locations that allowed the ancient Egyptians to observe and map the length of their shadows (Yaylaian 3). In the beginning, the obelisks aided ancient Egyptians only in identifying noon, yet soon they began to keep track of even more divisions of the day (Barksdale 1). Roughly 2 thousand years later, the ancient Egyptians furthered their science of timekeeping with both the merkhet and the sundial. The merkhet, which literally means “instrument of knowing”, was the first astronomical tool, and it enabled the ancient Egyptians to keep time at night, using the stars as a guide (Yaylaian 5). The sundial, on the other hand, utilized the sun to track the time with a blade on a round tablet that cast its shadow onto one of 10 numbers that divided the tablet. This technology, though inaccurate, later spread to other civilizations in Greece, Italy, and Asia (Barksdale 1).

As the ages passed, the science of timekeeping only improved. Timekeeping developed to include methods that did not expressly involve the sun and the stars. Though the first types of timekeeping technologies (such as sundials, merkhets, calendars, and the like) depended on the cosmos, the ancient invention of water clocks did not, and thus could be used at all times of day and in all conditions. Water clocks date back to the 16th century B.C. civilization of Babylon (Yaylaian 8). These clocks, known in Greek as clepsydras, or “water thief”, simply used water dripping from one container to another to measure the elapse of time (Barksdale 7). Though this type of time measurement is far from perfect, it was an improvement upon sundials, and was a point on which later generations used as inspiration for more accurate methods of harnessing the ever-elusive accuracy of time.

Timekeeping’s accuracy improved in the 1300s with the European invention of mechanical clocks. These clocks utilized weights and springs in combination with a bell in order to chime the hour. They were large clocks often found in churches and monasteries to ring in the time for prayers and services (“History of Telling Time” 6). Time had begun to take over man’s life. Slowly but surely, clocks (and man’s ever growing desire to improve and control timekeeping) improved, becoming more versatile, accurate, and
small. A myriad of special, novelty clocks have been present over time, whether it be the incense clocks of ancient China (which signaled the switching of the hour with a new scent), the Elephant Clock of medieval Europe (an intricately designed clock that depicted the movements of an elephant and its rider), or the animated automaton clocks used in Europe (examples include the cuckoo clock and others clocks that showcased intricate animated figures putting on performances) (Yaylaian 4-7). These clocks, as well as the other previously mentioned timekeeping methods, were far from the clocks of today, for they did not possess an hour hand or a minute hand. When did these improvements come about, and how did timekeeping make the leap to smaller intervals?

Once humans made the switch to mechanical designs, which include verge and foliot models as well as weight-driven models, tower clocks became omnipresent. From there, timepieces became smaller. The immensely popular grandfather clock eventually gave way for clocks that could fit on a shelf (Albom 107). However, the decrease in the size of timepieces did not stop there. A French mathematician became the first man to wear time on his body by tying a timepiece to his wrist, thus creating the first wristwatch (Albom 107). As Albom explains in his novel, “accuracy improved at a startling rate. Although it took until the sixteenth century for the minute hand to be invented, by the seventeenth century, the pendulum clock was accurate to within a minute a day. Less than one hundred years later, it was within a second. Time became an industry” (108). Man’s desire to rule time, and, unwittingly, to have it become the ruler of their lives, only increased as the centuries passed. Though the concept of time took a while to take hold, it experienced a snowball effect in which accuracy and ideas to make measuring time easier, faster, and more consistent surged as the ages went on.

In today’s world, the snowball effect has landed society in a place in which time rules every action that man takes. Man can find timepieces everywhere he goes: in the car, on the wall, on mobile devices, on the doors of businesses, in factories, and in classrooms. As Albom points out in his novel, the technology of today allows people to move at a blurring pace, yet no one is at peace. Humans constantly check their devices in order to check the time (145). Knowing the time has become both a necessity and an innate
desire. Man packs his days with busy schedules dependent entirely upon the clock. As a result, the beauty of life has become muddled, creating a standard in which time is the number one factor interwoven with the measures of a quality life. Albom speculates that, after suffering at the hands of his creation, Father Time must surely wonder if every clock maker pays a price (102). And indeed, it appears that every human does. Time has become the most precious commodity. Man never has enough of it, for he is always thirsting for more and fearing its end (Albom 61). It is evident that this messes with the nature of human kind, as well as with man’s view of the world, yet in what other ways has man’s perception of the world been effected by time?

Time dictates the lives of men who take it for granted as a constant, invariable entity, yet in the realm of scientific inquiry, time is perceived to be an inconsistent, inconceivable, and even non-existent force. Thanks to the works of physicists and great minds such as Albert Einstein, scientists have divined an innumerable amount of theories regarding time. Almost all of these theories have origins in Einstein’s general theory of relativity and his special theory of relativity, each of which renovated the perceptions of space-time forever. Both theories helped to obliterate the idea of time as a universal constant, and they declared that the past, present, and future are not absolutes (Folger 4). Einstein’s postulates shook the foundation of physics, for they determined that time is not constant, nor is it the same for everyone; time is relative to each individual, and is dependent upon their speed and location. As Albom concisely explains, “Einstein once postulated that if you traveled at an enormous rate of speed, time would actually slow down relative to the world you left behind so that seeing the future without aging alongside it was, at least theoretically, possible” (187). This concept, and the ways in which an individual perceives time, are therefore dependent upon their location and speed in comparison to the event that is being observed. This experience can be seen on both large and small scales. On a large scale, one can realize that the faster one is traveling relative to the speed of light, the slower time becomes (“7 Theories On Time That Would Make Doc Brown’s Head Explode” 11). An experiment done by scientist James Chin-Wen Chou and his colleagues demonstrates this theory on a more personal, realistic scale. Using two atomic clocks, the most
precise timekeeping tools ever developed, Chin-Wen Chou and his colleagues proved that when these atomic clocks experienced different altitudes or traveled at different speeds, their tick rates began to differ. The margin was extremely tiny - just 0.0000000000000001 percent different – yet the implications are enormous (Palca 3-4). These findings prove that time does not necessarily move at the same rate for everyone, and thus each individual’s perception of time varies greatly.

Even though humans tend to think of time as a constant, it is always fluctuating. Time is subjective. An individual’s perception of time can vary tremendously as a result of drugs, mental disorders, old age, distance, height, and even their brain time (Yezpitelok, Cantrell 19). As a result of different brain times and different rates of movement, it is possible for people to witness the same event at different speeds (Yezpitelok, Cantrell 17). Neuroscientist Dr. Warren Meck conducted experiments using rats in order to prove that each individual’s brain houses numerous different clocks that sense timings of events differently. These clocks, though working together, are independent, and the circumstances surrounding an event determine which of these brain clocks becomes the actual perception of time (Gleiser 6-8). In short, the situation an individual is in determines how they perceive the passage of time. For example, while on a date, a young couple may feel as if the time flies by, and that the time has passed quickly. However, right before said couple’s date, each individual feels as if time cannot go quickly enough, and they wish for it to speed up. Therefore, in each situation, the couple’s interpretation of time depends on the situation they are in, whom they are with, and how they are feeling.

Varying perceptions of time lend themselves to large, overreaching questions regarding the nature of time: what it truly is, where it came from, when it will end, etc. Yet some scientists find reason to believe that time does not exist in the manner we typically believe it does, if it even exists at all. A group of neuroscientists has determined through an experiment involving reaction time between seeing a light and pressing a button that what we believe to be the present is actually the past. This is due to the fact that humans’ brains continuously work to edit and censor events and happenings, creating a “delayed broadcast” that man interprets as the present (“7 Theories On Time That Would Make Doc Brown’s Head Explode”
2). However, some scientists believe in an entirely different idea regarding time: the idea that, at the fundamental level of physical reality, time does not exist. This idea is derived from the Wheeler-DeWitt equation, which was developed by physicists John Wheeler and Bryce DeWitt and attempts to mold the realm of quantum physics with Einstein’s rules of relativity (Folger 4). This melding is unharmonious, and creates what is known by physicists as “the problem of time”. The factor of time is nowhere to be found in the Wheeler-DeWitt equation, suggesting that the fundamental description of the universe must be timeless (Folger 5). Beyond just the questionable existence of time, physicists who believe in time face a problem: the laws of physics don’t explain why time always points to the future. After all, every law of physics would work just as well if time moved in the opposite direction, yet it is always perceived as a one-way only direction (Folger 7). Truly, there are countless scientific theories regarding the existence, flow, speed, and perceptions of time, and each of these theories are regarded in varying degrees by varying individuals.

What is time? Time is a symbol. Time is an industry. Time is an equation. Time is a goal and a fear, something which every human yearns for and wishes to control. The ways in which time is perceived is as infinite as time itself. Time is interpreted differently by every human, depending on their situation, location, mental state, and beliefs. Many look at time as a symbol, personified in figures such as Father Time and Saturn; others look at time as something to control and fine-tune; still others look at time as a mathematical problem that they must somehow fit into what is known about the rest of the physical world. Ultimately, time is all of these things and more. When one considers the concept of time, it is essential for one to realize that time is subjective. It is perceived differently everyday by every person, and it is a both a cause and effect of variation within the world of humans. So truly, what is time?
Works Cited


4. Writer’s Choice

Youtube Video—“Loyally Betrayed”

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2LXh6258R2U