

A Sound of Thunder **by Ray Bradbury**

English home study unit

HIAS English Team
Spring 2020
Final version

© Hampshire County Council



Using the home learning materials

How to use the materials

- This resource bank includes materials for several stages of learning – you can use these as individual lessons or work through them as a journey.
- You should complete all of the stages in order and aim to apply the learning from each stage to the final piece of writing.
- It is up to you how you use your time. It is likely that you will take between 3 and 6 hours to complete all the stages, but neither of the writing challenges are intended to be timed pieces, so take as long as you like!
- You may find it useful to discuss some of the stages with other students. However, if you prefer to work completely independently, that's fine.
- Where some stages suggest that you think about or make notes on a resource, you can use any format you like. If you would like more guidance on how to do this, examples and printable resources are attached at the end of this pack.
- Your teacher may ask you to send in your work at the end of each stage, or they may ask you to manage your own study and send in the finished piece of writing. Check that you know what your teacher expects you to do before you start.

Learning stages

This home learning journey leads towards a piece of narrative/descriptive writing about time travel and a persuasive article on the same theme. The main written outcome is a third person narrative that tells the story of travel to a distant time. The magazine article will persuade the government in the world of Ray Bradbury's short story to either cease or continue the use of time travel for leisure purposes

1. Exploring the text
2. Responding to the text
3. Building knowledge of themes
4. Building vocabulary
5. Noticing the way the writing is structured
6. Mapping the text
7. Writing challenge #1
8. Writing challenge #2
9. Review, edit, publish

A Sound of Thunder

Ray Bradbury's short science fiction story [*A Sound of Thunder*](#) is widely available online. The story was published in 1952 and is set in 2055.

Read the story up to the following sentence:

They moved silently across the room, taking their guns with them, toward the Machine, toward the silver metal and the roaring light.

Think about the following questions:

- **How is Eckels feeling about his hunting trip? What clues does the author give us about his state of mind?**
- **How is the process of time travel described in the company advert? In the description can you find examples that link to the theme of life and death?**
- **The man behind the desk states that the company “will give you the severest thrill a real hunter ever asked for.” What is the connotation of the word *real* in this sentence?**

Tip: discussion can be useful for this task



Responding to the text

Enjoy reading the remainder of the story.

Think about the following questions:

- Do you like the story? Why?
- Does the writer have a message for his readers? What might this be?
- How do you feel about the main character, Eckels? Do you have any sympathy for him? Why/why not?
- Have you read any science fiction before? Which elements make this story fit into the science fiction genre?
- Imagine that the story is being adapted into a film. If you were the director, who would you cast in each role and why?

Building your knowledge of themes

- Although this is a short story, it deals with some important themes. Think about what the themes might be in the story and how these are expressed.
 - For example, the theme of power and the abuse of power is expressed through the references to the presidential election. President Keith, who seems relaxed and democratic, is elected before time is ‘changed’. Later, when the timeline is altered, Deutscher, who is described as “militarist” and “anti-human”, is elected. Bradbury might also be showing us that unless we stop them, powerful and dangerous people will inevitably take control.
- **In the resources section you will find a cut and match task which will enable you to make links between the text and the themes that it expresses.**

Resources to help you organise your notes available at the end of this pack

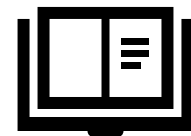
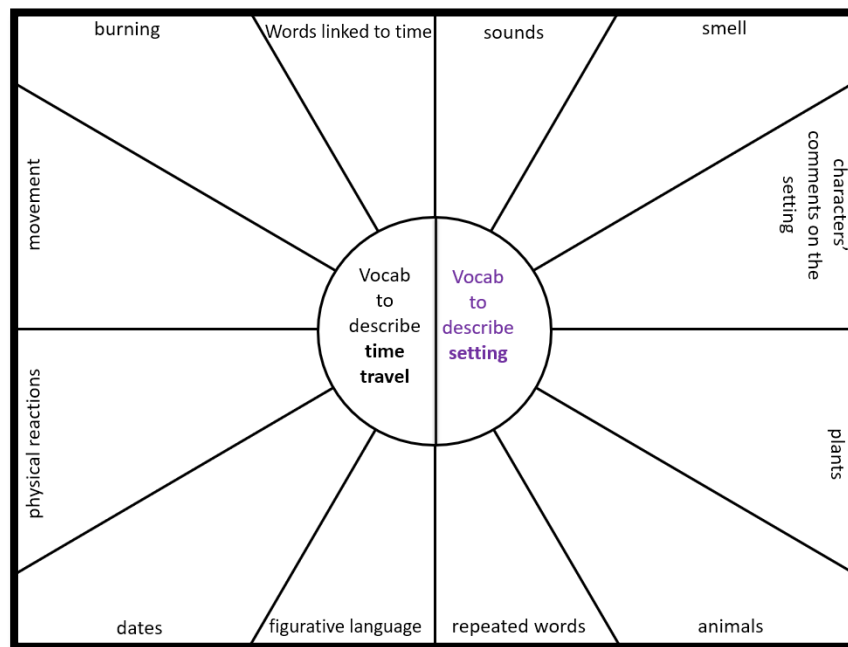


Building your vocabulary

Build and organise your vocabulary to describe time travel and arrival in an unfamiliar setting. You can draw upon the vocabulary in the text to support your own time travel narrative.

The two key areas to focus on are the description of time travel itself in the story and the description of the unfamiliar setting once the travellers arrive.

Complete the vocabulary bank to support you to consider the vocabulary used in these areas. You may not need to complete every section.



Noticing the writer at work

In our time travel narrative we will have to think about the first moments when our characters emerge from the time machine.

Think about the questions to support your understanding of the author's style in this section.

The Machine howled. Time was a film run backward. Suns fled and ten million moons fled after them. "Think," said Eckels. "Every hunter that ever lived would envy us today. This makes Africa seem like Illinois."

The Machine slowed; its scream fell to a murmur. The Machine stopped.

The sun stopped in the sky.

The fog that had enveloped the Machine blew away and they were in an old time, a very old time indeed, three hunters and two Safari Heads with their blue metal guns across their knees.

"Christ isn't born yet," said Travis, "Moses has not gone to the mountains to talk with God. The Pyramids are still in the earth, waiting to be cut out and put up. Remember that. Alexander, Caesar, Napoleon, Hitler-none of them exists." The man nodded.

"That" - Mr. Travis pointed - "is the jungle of sixty million two thousand and fifty-five years before President Keith."

Questions:

1. Why do you think the author chose the words 'howled', 'scream' and 'murmur' to describe the sound of the machine? What is the effect?
2. How does the characters' speech reinforce the enormity of the time travelled?
3. Why does the author choose to start most sentences with a noun phrase rather than trying to vary his sentence starters?

Mapping the text

Complete the table recognising the structure of Ray Bradbury’s story, from the time machine starting to the hunters beginning to explore the landscape. (Read from ‘First a day and then a night and then a day and then a night...’ up to the following section *“That” – Mr. Travis pointed...*)

This will support you when you come to write your own narrative.

Use the table in the resources section for this task.

What happens in the paragraph/section?	Intended effect on the reader	Vocabulary/ useful quotes
The time machine starts and accelerates, moving through years and decades at speed.	To demonstrate how quickly time can be navigated in the machine.	A.D. 2055. A.D. 2019. 1999! 1957! Gone! The Machine roared.
The men in the machine are described. Eckels’ physical reaction to time travel is also described.	To demonstrate the unsettling and frightening nature of the journey.	Eckels swayed on the padded seat, his face pale, his jaw stiff.

Resources to help you organise your notes available at the end of this pack



Writing challenge #1

Write a time travel narrative featuring a journey in a time machine and an exploration of a new setting.

Use the grid in the resources section to plan your writing.

You will need to decide on your main character and the point in time to which they are travelling. Also consider the possible motives for your character's journey.

Look back at your vocabulary work to support your planning. Aim to include precise vocabulary choices.

Try to imitate the features that Bradbury uses in your own writing:

- Describe the physical impact of time travel on your character.
- Use personification to describe the time machine.
- Use speech to emphasise the distance travelled and the unreal nature of arrival in the setting.

This piece of writing should be at least 4-5 paragraphs long – approximately 1-2 sides of handwriting or $\frac{3}{4}$ – 1 side typed.

Responding to the text

Summarise the ways in which the company, Time Safari Inc., tries to avoid changing history:

- What equipment have they developed?
- What rules have they put in place?
- What do they do in order to minimise the risk of changing history?
- What reasons do they give for each of their strategies?

Further exploration

One of the key ideas explored in A Sound of Thunder is known as chaos theory or ‘the butterfly effect’. If you are interested to find out more about these ideas, follow these links:

- [Simple explanation of chaos theory from Jurassic Park](#)
- [Simple English Wikipedia](#)
- [TEDX Talk from Samuel Won explaining chaos theory](#)

Tip: discussion can be useful for this task



Writing challenge #2

Write a magazine article setting out the case for preventing the use of time travel for leisure purposes. Alternatively, you could choose to argue in favour of continuing the practice and set out the benefits of time travel.

Use the grid in the resources section to plan your writing. The following is a partially completed grid to support your thinking:

<p><i>Introduction – outlining your argument</i></p>	<p>Time travel should be prevented –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It could have disastrous consequences for us • It is dangerous for participants • It is an inappropriate use of technology
<p><i>Point 1</i></p>	<p>Time travel could have disastrous consequences for our civilisation. Even a small change could disrupt the future and our present. Examples: the accidental removal of a species, the introduction of diseases/bacteria to earlier times, the possibility of leaving technology/items in the past</p>

This piece of writing should be at least 4-5 paragraphs long – approximately 1-2 sides of handwriting or $\frac{3}{4}$ – 1 side typed.

Edit and improve



What do you need to **ADD** to your writing?

Does your writing need more detail for the reader – maybe to build a more vivid description, or add detail to help the reader understand the event / issue / character viewpoint?

said

What do you need to **REPLACE** or **REVISE** in your writing?

This might be individual words / phrases or a whole paragraph. Could you revise some of your choices to more appropriate words or more / less intense word choices? Think in particular about the intensity of the verbs you use.



What words / phrases / paragraphs should you **TAKE AWAY**?

Perhaps they are overloaded with adjectives, perhaps there is unnecessary repetition. You need to think about quality rather than quantity. Sometimes less writing is more powerful. Consider how to make the moments of clarity stand out.



Which words / phrases / paragraphs need to **MOVE AROUND** ?

You need to make sure your writing makes sense and flows easily for the reader. How will you ensure your writing has cohesion and a strong overall structure?

Polish and publish

Hand in the final version(s) of your work to your teacher.

Extra credit: If you have typed your work, print your final version with wide margins and double-spaced lines. In the space around the text, annotate your writing to explain the choices you have made and the way that you have included the key features from this unit. Photograph this annotated version to hand in.

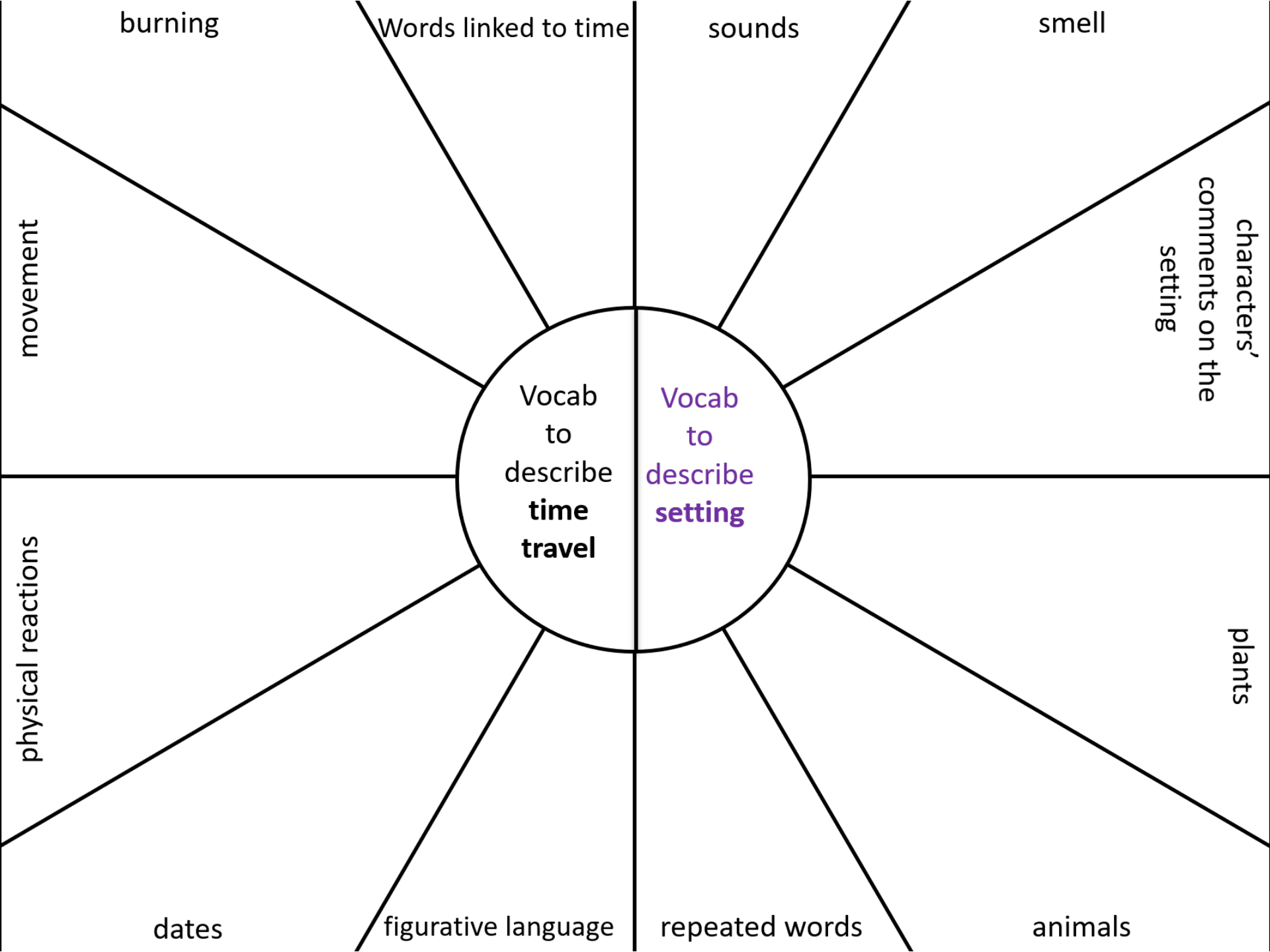
Resources

A Sound of Thunder

Building your knowledge of themes

Cut and match the quotes with the themes that they relate to. Some quotes may fit with more than one theme.

Themes	Quotes	Quotes
Hunting	Not that fool weakling Keith. We got an iron man now, a man with guts!	Not knowing it, we might kill an important animal, a small bird, a roach, a flower even, thus destroying an important link in a growing species
Power and the abuse of power	Step on a mouse and you leave your print, like a Grand Canyon, across Eternity. Queen Elizabeth might never be born, Washington might not cross the Delaware, there might never be a United States at all.	He glanced at the two hunters. "You want the trophy picture?"
Small actions can have big consequences	We're lucky. If Deutscher had gotten in, we'd have the worst kind of dictatorship.	We're here to give you the severest thrill a real hunter ever asked for. Traveling you back sixty million years to bag the biggest game in all of Time



Vocab
to
describe
**time
travel**

Vocab
to
describe
setting

burning

Words linked to time

sounds

smell

characters'
comments on the
setting

plants

animals

repeated words

figurative language

dates

physical reactions

movement

What happens in the paragraph/section?	Intended effect on the reader	Vocabulary/ useful quotes
The time machine starts and accelerates, moving through years and decades at speed.	To demonstrate how quickly time can be navigated in the machine.	A.D. 2055. A.D. 2019. 1999! 1957! Gone! The Machine roared.
The men in the machine are described, as is Eckels' physical reaction to time travel.	To demonstrate the unsettling and frightening nature of the journey.	Eckels swayed on the padded seat, his face pale, his jaw stiff.
Eckels asks how to kill the dinosaurs. Travis advises him.		
		The Machine slowed; its scream fell to a murmur. The Machine stopped.
Travis reminds the group how far they have travelled back in time.		

Mapping out your own writing

What happens in the paragraph?	Intended effect on the reader	Vocabulary

Introduction – outlining your argument	
<i>Point 1</i>	
<i>Point 2</i>	
<i>Point 3</i>	
Conclusion – reinforcing your argument	

HIAS English team

The HIAS English team offer a wide range of high-quality services to support schools in improving outcomes for learners, including courses, bespoke consultancy and in-house training.

During the current school closures, we are still offering school support in a variety of ways such as video conferencing, phone calls and bespoke creation of resources remotely. Coming soon will be teacher training via virtual classrooms. We would be happy to discuss your needs.

For further details referring to English, please contact the English team leader:

Emma Tarrant : emma.tarrant@hants.gov.uk

For further details on the full range of services available please contact us using the following details:

Tel: 01962 874820 or email: hias.enquiries@hants.gov.uk

