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L Section

### Why Don't People Talk to Each Other? It's Those Pesky iPhones

Society depends on the use of technology to make people's lives easier and more efficient. As an example of this, in "August 2026: There Will Come Soft Rains," and "The Pedestrian," by Ray Bradbury, the people presented are reliant on technology in their everyday lives. However, as a consequence of this, there is an inherent lack of connection between people. In "The Pedestrian," everyone who lives in the city is addicted to their television screens, and no one goes outside. In "August 2026," society has been decimated by an atomic bomb, and the only structure left standing is a house that is programmed to run its occupants' daily lives. Written in the early 1950's, when the tech industry was beginning to establish its place in society, both stories represent Bradbury's opinion on the eventual effects of technology on the whole of humanity. Bradbury more effectively warns society that technology deprives people of human interaction in "The Pedestrian" than "August 2026," through deliberate word choice, personification, and imagery.

The deliberate references to death that Bradbury makes in "The Pedestrian" serve to better emphasize the lack of human connection in the story than the constant use of repetition used by the house in "August 2026." In "The Pedestrian," Bradbury compares the city to a graveyard in order to evoke an uneasy feeling. To convey this ambience, he writes, "...it was not unequal to walking through a graveyard...Sudden gray phantoms seemed to manifest upon inner room walls...or there were whisperings and murmurs where a window in a tomblike

building was still open.” (1). Much like a graveyard, the whole city is unsettlingly quiet and hollow, and if not for the lights created by the televisions, the presence of human beings might not even be noticeable. By using repetitive references to death, Bradbury communicates how the people who live in the city are figuratively dead, which is a result of the lack of interaction between the human characters in the story. In contrast to this, the use of repetition and rhyming by the house in “August 2026” also shows a lack of human interaction, but for a different reason. The house is constantly repeating phrases such as “Eight-one, tick-tock, eight-one o'clock, off to school, off to work, run, run, eight-one!” (1). The constant use of childlike rhymes by the house reflects rigid programming and inhuman thinking. The lack of response to the house’s commands also shows a lack of human interaction in a way that is less explicit than “The Pedestrian,” due to the absence of the occupants only being implied and not expressly stated.

The sentient police car in “The Pedestrian” serves as a more effective symbol of the lack of human interaction than the personification of the house in “August 2026. The conversation between Leonard and the police car serves as the only existing communication between two characters in “The Pedestrian”, and there is an inherent lack of empathy and humanity that exists in the responses of the police car. Leonard questioned the police car about its intentions, “...The car hesitated, or rather gave a faint whirring click, as if information, somewhere, was dropping card by punch-slotted card under electric eyes.” (2). It is unable to truly comprehend the responses that Leonard gives, or why he might be outside walking by himself. Rather, it processes the information it can handle, and makes the decision to bring him to the psychiatric hospital, despite Leonard’s protesting. The lack of human connection is better represented in

this short story, as the complete lack of empathy by the police car shows that meaningful interactions between people are no longer present in that society. In "August 2026," the house is presented as its own character, and it exists as the only semi-sentient being in the story. Bradbury describes the house dying in the fire by saying, "The house shuddered, oak bone on bone, its bared skeleton cringing from the heat, its wire, its nerves revealed as if a surgeon had torn the skin off to let the red veins and capillaries quiver in the scalded air." (5). Despite its human-like intelligence and knowledge, the house has limits. It must follow the rules of its rigid programming, which represents a lack of true humanity. The isolation of the house, combined with the lack of human characters for it to interact with, evoke a feeling of solitude that is associated with a lack of connection and interaction. However, this is less effective than the stark lack of empathy and understanding that the police car exhibited towards Leonard in "The Pedestrian."

In "The Pedestrian," the use of imagery to describe the long empty streets of the city is more impactful on the reader than the description of the empty house in "August 2026." The chilling imagery presented of the empty city in "The Pedestrian" serves to impose the true severity of the situation on the reader. Bradbury describes the street that Leonard was walking along as, "...silent and long and empty, with only his shadow moving like the shadow of a hawk...he could imagine himself upon the center of a plain, a wintry, windless Arizona desert with no house in a thousand miles..." (1). In today's society, cities are always lively and bustling with millions of people. The comparison to a desert, however, shows the reader that this city is unnaturally quiet and empty. This is the result of the persistent use and addiction to television, which emphasizes Bradbury's message about the dangers of technology. Similarly, in "August

2026,” Bradbury uses imagery to describe the hollowness of the house by writing, “The morning house lay empty. The clock ticked on, repeating and repeating its sounds into the emptiness. “(1). Even though it is empty, the house keeps repeating its commands throughout the day, despite no one being there to listen or respond to them. In this way, the lack of human interaction is implied due to the absence of any reply. However, the striking imagery used in “The Pedestrian,” is more effective in establishing the absence of people than the subtler implications in “August 2026.”

To conclude, Bradbury more effectively communicates the negative effects of technology on true human connection and interaction through the use of personification, deliberate word choice, and striking imagery in “The Pedestrian”. “August 2026” also communicates the message that Bradbury intended it to, but does so less adequately. The lack of interaction between the human characters in both “August 2026” and “The Pedestrian,” however, represent an issue that is ever-present in today’s society. Technology, while making everyday life more efficient, enables people to distance themselves more easily from others. As a result of this, Bradbury’s warning is especially relevant to the modern world.