Ray Bradbury is widely considered one of the greatest and most popular American writers of speculative fiction of the twentieth century. His novels and short stories are full of different ideas which show the author’s attitude to many aspects of life and human civilization and make readers think, evaluate, stop or start doing things. The short story “The Smile” is a vivid example of Bradbury’s warning, where he draws the readers’ eye to the future of human civilization. The narrator delivers his ideas to readers via different means: images, symbols, composition structure, language.

THE WAYS OF EXPRESSING HOPE IN RAY BRADBURY’S SHORT STORY “THE SMILE”

Ray Bradbury is widely considered one of the greatest and most popular American writers of speculative fiction of the twentieth century. His novels and short stories are full of different ideas which show the author’s attitude to many aspects of life and human civilization and make readers think, evaluate, stop or start doing things. The short story “The Smile” is a vivid example of Bradbury’s warning, where he draws the readers’ eye to the future of human civilization. The story seems to be really strong today -- the time of conflicts and wars, misunderstandings and being reluctant to listen and hear. At the same time the author doesn’t lose hope that future might be optimistic.
The narrator delivers his ideas to readers via different means: images, symbols, composition structure, language.

The narration begins with the morning and ends with the start of a new day. The circle composition is not accidental. The author wants to show the reconstruction of time, this idea runs through the story. R. Bradbury says that time is an endless thing (he mentions the Past, the Present and the Future) and with time we can change everything: our appearance, our thoughts and our life. Morning personifies light, warmth and the beginning of a new day.

The image of the Moon intensifies the idea of hope too. By its phases the Moon symbolizes changes, renewal, keeping pace, not stagnation. The author believes in reconstruction of the world and people’s mind. And the key to the recovery is harmony.

On the other hand the narration is not limited by one day only. Introducing the image of Leonardo da Vinci, R. Bradbury appeals to the Renaissance, the epoch of development, flourishing and contribution. Thus the author believes that such bright changes will follow the crisis of civilization. The author also mentions the Renaissance because it is the time of reconstruction after the dark Middle Ages. We understand that Bradbury wants to show that all the history of mankind develops gradually, but with its ups and downs. The Renaissance is the symbol of restoration. And R. Bradbury believes that the period of decline is followed by the period of prosperity. The fact that Leonardo da Vinci, a prolific genius, talented in many spheres of culture and science, is one of the strongest images of the story makes readers believe, as well as R. Bradbury does, that the renaissance of the civilization takes place.

Then, it’s quite important that the crowd in the story tear not the original “Mona Lisa”, but a copy. It gives us hope that cultural values will never die out, and there always be people for whom they will be a treasure.

The end of the story reflects hope as well. Tom is happy, holding a piece of canvas in his hands, he is at home with his family -- a place where people feel comfort and support.
R. Bradbury makes a child the main character not by chance. Tom is an open book, unspoiled, he is curious and he believes in better life. The author thinks it is very important to perceive the world like a child, with the eyes, full of curiosity and interest, to be a person with a soul, with one’s own experience and wisdom. Tom does not want to hate the world and the Past. He is interested in it and he wants to know everything about the painting. He is fascinated by the picture and he does not join a mad crowd. He makes the right choice: he decides to save the piece of canvas, the piece of the Past. He saves it in order not to lose hope at all. Tom becomes the person who can help the society to recover and reconstruct a future world. And the future of the world depends on such people.

One more thing that sounds optimistic is the dialogues between men standing in the queue. They discuss the modern state of the world and argue with each other: some suppose that there is no chance, there is no happy future and the end is inevitable, while others say there is no person, who can make people believe in better and lead them to a new world. And it is very important that their discussion ends with a positive remark. The author is sure that the crisis will turn into prosperity and wealth.

Though the general negative tone of the story prevails, there are linguistic means (positive metaphors, repetitions, emotionally colored words, the ways to express contrast) that disapprove the author’s pessimism and contribute to the idea of hope in Ray Bradbury’s short story “The Smile”.