



MR. ROGERS' NEIGHBORHOOD

INTRODUCTION

By Tracy Hanson

Every weekday at 5 pm, Mr. Rogers came into our living room. I am not so sure that my son got much out of the experience but I believe his philosophy and attitude towards not just children, but adults as well had a huge influence on me. I believe his message back in the '60's when he started Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood is just as, if not more important now as the world faces the Covid pandemic.

He was referred to as America's neighbor but I wonder if he was at all known in other countries. Here are some great sites to explore to learn more about the life of Fred Rogers and his Land of Make-Believe.

This script only touches on a little of his work but there are some great sites to explore and learn from.

Listen to the song, ["Won't You Be My Neighbor"](#) which is sung in the play as well as other favorite songs he wrote.

Find out about his [puppets](#) and how he used them in his storytelling than learn how to make your own felt [puppets](#).

And don't forget to journey through his [neighborhood](#).

(Information for the script was taken from the January 4, 20219 Special Edition of [Newsweek](#), "Mister Rogers: His Life, His Legacy and the Virtues of Everyone's Favorite Neighbor. Here is a good site to read his [biography](#). The quotes were taken from [goodreads](#).)

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FRED	GRANDFATHER	GRANDMOTHER	GRANDSON
NARRATOR 1	NARRATOR 2	NARRATOR 3	SEN. PASTORE

Grandfather and Grandmother together

*Note: The person reading **Fred Rogers** will read lines through cupped hands to give a more distant, echo sound to voice.*

FRED: “You rarely have time for everything you want in this life, so you need to make choices. And hopefully your choices can come from a deep sense of who you are.”

GRANDFATHER: Now spell “kingdom”.

GRANDSON: k-i-n-g-d-o-m

GRANDMOTHER: (laughing) Well, I think it ought to be called a “queen-dom”.

GRANDSON: (sarcastically) Ha, right

GRANDFATHER: Last word: spell “neighbor”.

GRANDSON: Neighbor. You mean like Aberlin and Brocke who live next door?

GRANDFATHER: Yes, like your friends next door.

GRANDMOTHER: Well, a neighbor isn't just someone who lives next door. We have friends who live in our neighborhood.

GRANDSON: (starting to spell) n-e-i-

GRANDFATHER: You know, now when you think of a real neighbor, you can't help but think of Fred Rogers!

GRANDMOTHER: That's true, he was called America's best neighbor.

GRANDFATHER: Mmm, and to think that he has been dead like 18 years now.

GRANDMOTHER: Maybe, but what he stood for then is just as important now.

GRANDSON: Wait a minute! I know who you're talking about! You're talking about Mr. Rogers. There is a movie they made about him called "A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood".



GRANDMOTHER: (Laughing) We use to watch Mr. Rogers with your mother when she was a child. Came on every week-day afternoon. Your grandpa and mother would watch it while I was fixing dinner.

***GRANDFATHER & GRANDMOTHER:** (*Singing*): It's a beautiful day in the neighborhood, (voices fading) a beautiful day for a neighbor. Would you be mine? Could you be mine?...

FRED: "The greatest gift you ever give is your honest self."

NARRATOR 1: Fred was born in a Pennsylvania town called Latrobe. His maternal grandfather founded the McFeely Brick Company.

NARRATOR 2: Hey, that's the name of the Speedy Delivery Service mailman on his show.

NARRATOR 1: His family was very well-off but he learned at an early age, what it meant to be one of "the helpers." His mother, Nancy, was known for her generosity and giving to the people of their community.



FRED: "When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, "Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping."

NARRATOR 3: In fact, during *World War I*, when she was only 14 years old, she knitted sweaters for the soldiers from western Pennsylvania who were fighting in the war.

NARRATOR 2: You know, she kept right on knitting! She made over 60 *cardigans* for Fred, one every year at Christmas. In fact, those were the sweaters he wore on TV.

FRED: "I hope you're proud of yourself for the times you've said "yes," when all it meant was extra work for you and was seemingly helpful only to someone else."

NARRATOR 1: It's hard to believe he had a hard time fitting in with his peers. But he was sort of a loner and the other boys could be very cruel.

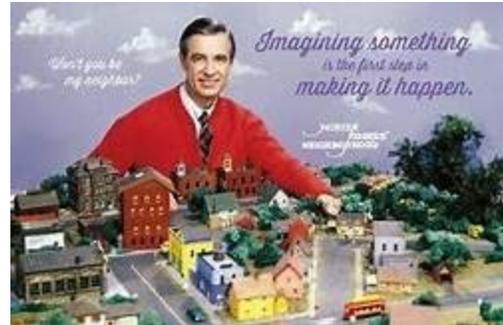
NARRATOR 2: But that's why he turned to reading, listening to music and playing alone with his toys and puppets.

NARRATOR 3: He was a good student in high school and was headed for the *Ivy League - Dartmouth College*. Though he had everything all planned out, it didn't take long for him to realize it wasn't the place for him.

FRED: "Often when you think you're at the end of something, you're at the beginning of something else."

NARRATOR 2: He was miserable, but a music professor helped him find a place at the Music Conservatory of Rollins College in Florida.

NARRATOR 1: Here was a place perfect for Fred; felt warm and friendly where students had a sense of fun and good humor rather than pretending to be macho. It was an environment completely characterized by a love of music.



NARRATOR 3: Fred loved Rollins and was able to use what he had learned from his McFeely Grandparents and the Presbyterian Church to which he belonged to good use.

NARRATOR 2: He spent his youth figuring out who he was by bringing together the lessons he had learned from those resources.

FRED: "Who we are in the present includes who we were in the past."

NARRATOR 1: He began his work career at NBC to learn more about the TV business with his focus now on helping children learn to deal with their feelings.

NARRATOR 3: But then a group in Pittsburg decided to start the first community-based public television station in the United States in the early 50's.

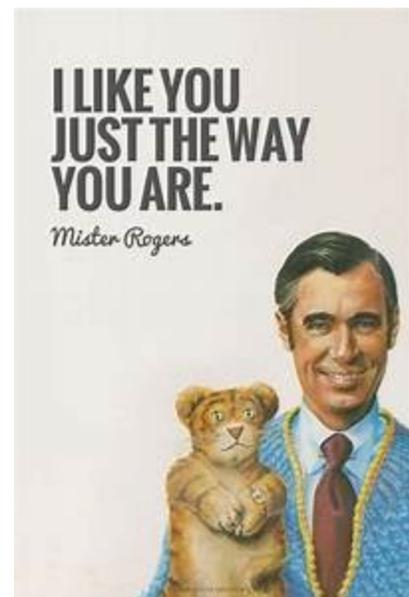
NARRATOR 1: What a perfect opportunity for Fred. He knew that being an executive would not be a happy and fulfilling career.

FRED: “The thing I remember best about successful people I've met all through the years is their obvious delight in what they're doing and it seems to have very little to do with worldly success. They just love what they're doing, and they love it in front of others.”

NARRATOR 3: He jumped at the opportunity to create informative programming for children and volunteered to produce daily content for WQED, the small Pittsburgh station.

NARRATOR 2: And that was the beginnings of “The Children’s Corner” which was the forerunner of “Mister Rogers Neighborhood”

FRED: “In times of stress, the best thing we can do for each other is to listen with our ears and our hearts and to be assured that our questions are just as important as our answers.”



NARRATOR 1: He also became a Presbyterian minister feeling it would help him to better reach children.

FRED: “Discovering the truth about ourselves is a lifetime’s work, but it’s worth the effort.”

NARRATOR 3: It was perfect! He could combine his two guiding passions; music and spiritual teaching to reach and help both parents and children through a fun, approachable and creative environment.

NARRATOR 2: You know, his show was such a huge success that only after a year on air with PBS, he was selected to speak at the Pastore Hearings in Washington, DC.

NARRATOR 1: This was in 1969. The Congressional subcommittee was discussing whether PBS should continue receiving funding.

FRED: This is what I give. I give an expression of care every day to each child, to help him realize that he is unique. I end the program by saying, “You’ve made this day a special day, by just your being you. There’s no person in the whole world like you, and I like you, just the way you are.”



SEN. PASTORE: (*committee chairman*): “I’m supposed to be a pretty tough guy, and this is the first time I’ve had goose bumps for the last two days. Looks like you just earned the funding.”

NARRATOR 3: Mr Rogers believed and proved time and time again that children didn’t want to have “sugar coated” lessons. They want honesty and they wanted to belong.

FRED: “Anything that’s human is mentionable, and anything that is mentionable can be more manageable. When we can talk about our feelings, they become less overwhelming, less upsetting, and less scary.

NARRATOR 1: You know, Mr. Rogers’ Neighborhood ran from 1968 to 2001, that’s 33 years!

NARRATOR 2: He dedicated his life to teaching children and their parents how to live life having a neighborly influence on those around them.

NARRATOR 3: He was 74 years old when he died in 2003,

NARRATOR 1: But he made a huge difference in people’s lives simply through his gestures of friendship, kindness and love.



FRED: “To this day, especially in times of "disaster," I remember my mother's words and I am always comforted by realizing that there are still so many helpers – so many caring people in this world.”

***GRANDFATHER & GRANDMOTHER:** *(fading in)* Won’t you please? Won’t you please? Please won’t you be my neighbor?

GRANDFATHER: *(laughing)* Well, we better finish up that spelling list. Now where were we?

GRANDSON: neighbor....n-e-i-g-h-b-o-r. Like Mr. Rogers!

FRED: You help to make each day a special day
By just your being yourself.
There’s nobody else in the whole world who’s exactly like you
And people can like you exactly as you are.



All Sing:

It's a beautiful day in this neighborhood,

A beautiful day for a neighbor.

Would you be mine?

Could you be mine?

It's a neighborly day in this beauty wood,

A neighborly day for a beauty,

Would you be mine?

Could you be mine?