WHAT A WONDERFUL WORLD
By Bob Thiele, George Weiss, Louis Armstrong

I see trees of green, red roses too
I see them bloom, for me and you
And I think to myself
What a wonderful world

I see skies of blue, clouds of white
Bright blessed days, dark sacred nights
And I think to myself
What a wonderful world

The colors of a rainbow
So pretty in the sky
Are also on the faces
Of people passing by
I see friends shaking hands,
saying "How do you do?"
They're really saying, "I love you"
I hear babies cry, I watch them grow
They'll learn much more
Than I'll never know
And I think to myself
What a wonderful world
Yes, I think to myself
What a wonderful world
Oh, Yeah

WHAT A WONDERFUL WORLD - The song was written and recorded in 1967. This was a time of chaos and upheaval in America. There were race riots across the country, as well as mass protests against the Vietnam War. Because of this, some people felt the song was not reflective of reality, to which Armstrong responded: "Some of you young folks been saying to me: 'Hey, Pops - what do you mean, what a wonderful world? How about all them wars all over the place, you call them wonderful?' But how about listening to old Pops for a minute? Seems to me it ain't the world that's so bad but what we're doing to it, and all I'm saying is: see what a wonderful world it would be if only we'd give it a chance." 

- Bright blessed days - A deeper appreciation of nature's beauty can lead to a wondrous sense of the Divine or the sacred within nature. 

- On the faces of people passing by - The colors and beauty of nature are reflected in humanity. From this point on, the lyrics shift from a focus on earth and sky, to appreciating the wonder of love between people. They'll learn much more - There is always hope that the next generation will be able to solve problems that we couldn't. Additionally, thinking about what kinds of amazing things will be invented in the future, and what kinds of ways humans will be expressing their ingenuity is truly mind-boggling.

The beginning of our happiness lies in the understanding that life without wonder is not worth living. What we lack is not a will to believe but a will to wonder. I see trees of green - The cognitive leap from appreciating the beauty of the blue sky of nature to contemplating the presence of the holy, blessed, or sacred within nature is often accomplished through a cultivated sense of wonder or radical amazement. This perspectival process is echoed in a poetic teaching from the Talmud about the blue thread of tzitzit that hangs from the corners of a tallit which is similar to the sea, which is similar to the sky, which is similar to the sapphire Throne of Glory. (Menahot 43b). The colors of a rainbow - The rainbow is God's sign to Noah that God would not destroy the world again. They're really saying - Most times we only see what is on the surface. A sense of wonder allows us to see what is not shown, to hear what is not said. I hear babies cry - On the surface, this is a touching image of the vulnerability of new life, but it may also refer to the protestations of the youth during the tumultuous time in which the song was written. From Louis Armstrong's perspective, as an elder during the 60s, the complaints and critiques of the youth may have sounded like the pleading cries of an innocent child. The lyrics to this song, which at first appear as naive, may then be recontextualized as a mature and active outlook on the multi-faceted nature of reality, which is both conflicted and in need of repair, as well as cohesive and worthy of our wonder and awe. Than I'll ever know - This humble last line acknowledges the limits of one's own understanding and denotes radical amazement. According to Rabbi Heschel: "Awareness of the divine begins with wonder. It is the result of what man <sic> does with his higher incomprehension."