

Instructions: Read Fahrenheit 451. As you read, answer the following questions to support your critical thinking. After you have read and answered the questions, select and complete one of the activities listed at the bottom. The completed questions and activity are due Aug. 17th (preferably typed).

Online copy:

<https://www.fsusd.org/cms/lib03/CA01001943/Centricity/Domain/2034/Fahrenheit%20451.pdf>

Part One: The Hearth and the Salamander

1. Clarisse tells Montag that she is seventeen and crazy. She explains, "My uncle says the two always go together. When people ask your age, he said, always say seventeen and insane." (7) What does her Uncle's joke illustrate regarding the relationships between youth and adults?
2. Clarisse notes that many people are afraid of firemen. Why do you think this might be the case? How does this differ from the way our society views firemen? Why do you think Clarisse isn't afraid? (7)
3. When do you think these events are taking place? What evidence makes you think this? (Hint: "Is it true that long ago firemen put fires out instead of going to start them?" (8)
4. Clarisse says to Montag, "You laugh when I haven't been funny and you answer right off. You never stop to think what I've asked you." (8) What commentary is she subtly making about him?
5. What is the significance of the numbers 451 and why do you think they are stitched on the fireman's sleeves?
6. What evidence does Clarisse note that society is in a constant rush? (9) What message do you think the author is trying to convey?
7. Why do you think Montag is so curious about Clarisse's family and their conversations?
8. Why is Montag struck by Clarisse's question of whether or not he is "happy?"
9. Bradbury writes of Montag, "He wore his happiness like a mask and the girl had run off across the lawn with the mask and there was no way of going to knock on her door and ask for it back." (p. 12) What does this mean? What other types of symbolic masks do people wear?
10. Clarisse says: "How did it start? How did you get into it? How did you pick your work and how did you happen to think to take the job you have? You're not like the others. I've seen a few; I know. When I talk, you look at time. When I said something about the moon, you looked at the moon, last night. The others would never do that. The others would walk off and leave me talking. Or threaten me. No one has time any more for anyone else. You're one of the few who put up with me. That's why I think it's so strange you're a fireman. It just doesn't seem right for you, somehow." (23-24) What do we learn about Montag in Clarisse's description of him? What do we learn about this society in general from her comment?
11. "He felt his body divide itself into a hotness and a coldness, a softness and a hardness, a trembling and a not trembling, the two halves grinding one upon the other." (23-24) What does this line tell us? What might it be foreshadowing?
12. Montag has alluded to the "ventilator grille in the hall at home and what lay hidden behind" several times. What do you predict is in the grille? (10, 27)
13. Beatty asks Montag if he has a guilty conscious. Does he? What makes you think this? (28)
14. Reread the passage where Clarisse discusses being social and addresses the day to day life of youth:

1 " 'I'm antisocial, they say. I don't mix. It's so strange. I'm very social indeed. It all depends on what you mean by social, doesn't it? Social to me means talking to you about things like this.' She rattled some

chestnuts that had fallen off the tree in the front yard. 'Or talking about how strange the world is. Being with people is nice. But I don't think it's social to get a bunch of people together and then not let them talk, do you? An hour of TV class, an hour of basketball or baseball or running, another hour of transcription history or painting pictures, and more sports, but do you know, we never ask questions, or at least most don't; they just run the answers at you, bing, bing, bing, and us sitting there for four more hours of film teacher. That's not social to me at all. It's a lot of funnels and a lot of water poured down the spout and out the bottom, and them telling us it's wine when it's not. They run us so ragged by the end of the day we can't do anything but go to bed or head for a Fun Park to bully people around, break windowpanes in the Window Smasher place or wreck cars in the Car Wrecker place with the big steel ball. Or go out in the cars and race on the streets, trying to see how close you can get to lampposts, playing "chicken" and "knock hubcaps." I guess I'm everything they say I am, all right. I haven't any friends. That's supposed to prove I'm abnormal. But everyone I know is either shouting or dancing around like wild or beating up one another. Do you notice how people hurt each other nowadays?" (29-30)

What message is Clarisse trying to convey? Why do you think she complains that students "never ask questions?" Do you see any similarities in the life of youth today as described by Clarisse? Explain.

17. Why does Clarisse say she is afraid of children her age? ("I'm afraid of children my age. They kill each other. Did it always use to be that way? My uncle says no. Six of my friends have been shot in the last year alone. Ten of them die in car wrecks. I'm afraid of them and they don't like me because I'm afraid. My uncle says his grandfather remembered when children didn't kill each other. But that was a long time ago when they had things different. They believed in responsibility, my uncle says." (30)
18. Clarisse says that "People don't talk about anything...nobody says anything different from anyone else...My uncle says it was different once" (p.31). Why does this bother her?
19. What do you think Montag means when he says his co-workers' faces were sun burnt by "a thousand real and ten thousand imaginary fires?" (33)
20. It is stated that all fireman look the same – what is the significance of this? (33)
21. What kind of history is provided to Montag when he asks whether fireman used to put fires out? (34) What might this say regarding how history is recorded and retold?
22. Why is Montag so bothered by the burning of Mrs. Blake's home? (36-40)
23. Why do you think Montag and his wife can't remember when they met? (43)
24. Montag notes that he feels "empty" - "And he remembered thinking then that if she died, he was certain he wouldn't cry. For it would be the dying of an unknown, a street face, a newspaper image, and it was suddenly so very wrong that he had begun to cry, not at death but at the thought of not crying at death, a silly empty man near a silly empty woman, while the hungry snake made her still more empty. How do you get so empty? he wondered. Who takes it out of you?" (44) Why do you think he feels this emptiness? How would you respond to his question regarding who took it out of him?
25. Summarize the history of the fire department according to Beatty. (54) According to Beatty, what caused the rule regarding books? (58)
26. Reread Beatty's commentary regarding how schools used to be:
"With school turning out more runners, jumpers, racers, tinkers, grabbers, snatchers, fliers, and swimmers instead of examiners, critics, knowers, and imaginative creators, the word 'intellectual' of course, became the swear word it deserved to be. You always dread the unfamiliar. Surely you remember the boy in your own school class who was exceptionally

'bright,' did most of the reciting and answering while the others sat like so many leaden idols, hating him. And wasn't it this bright boy you selected for beatings and tortures after hours? Of course it was. We must all be alike. Not everyone born free and equal, as the Constitution says, but everyone made equal. Each man the image of every other; then all are happy, for there are no mountains to make them cower, to judge themselves against. So! A book is a loaded gun in the house next door. Burn it. Take the shot from the weapon. Breach man's mind. Who knows who might be the target of the well-read man?" (58)

27. Based on this passage alone, how would you characterize Beatty? According to Beatty, what type of student should be valued and why? Why do you think Beatty feels that "we must all be alike?" Do you see examples of this same mentality in our society today? Are there specific examples of anti-intellectual sentiment in your school or community?
28. According to Beatty, what are firemen tasked with? Should a society have "custodians of our peace of mind," "official censors, judges, and executors" who protect us from "understandable and rightful dread of being inferior?" (59) Explain.
29. What does Beatty say regarding keeping people happy?
"You must understand that our civilization is so vast that we can't have our minorities upset and stirred. Ask yourself, What do we want in this country, above all? People want to be happy, isn't that right? Haven't you heard it all your life? I want to be happy, people say. We'll, aren't they? Don't we keep them moving, don't we give them fun? That's all we live for, isn't it? For pleasure, for titillation? And you must admit our culture provides plenty of these." (59)

How does this society attempt to preserve happiness? Are these means effective? Why or why not? Do you agree with Beatty that we should only live for pleasure? Why or why not?

30. How does Beatty justify the burning of books?

"Colored people don't like Little Black Sambo. Burn it. White people don't feel good about Uncle Tom's Cabin. Burn it. Someone's written a book on tobacco and cancer of the lungs? The cigarette people are weeping? Burn the book. Serenity, Montag. Peace, Montag. Take your flight outside. Better yet, into the incinerator. Funerals are unhappy and pagan? Eliminate them, too. Five minutes after a person is dead he's on his way to the Big Flue, the Incinerators serviced by helicopters all over the country. Ten minutes after death a man's a speck of black dust. Let's not quibble over individuals with memoriums. Forget them. Burn all, burn everything. Fire is bright and fire is clean." (60)

What ensures that our government cannot instate similar practices as those addressed in this passage, such as laws against funerals or mandatory book burnings? By having a First Amendment that protects freedom of speech and assembly, we may often come across ideas that we vehemently disagree with. For example, as long as they get a valid permit and protest peacefully, a hate group such as the KKK can share its ideas and opinions legally. What is your opinion of this?

31. How does the destruction of books lead to more happiness and equality, according to Beatty? Does his lecture to Montag on the rights of man sound like any rhetoric still employed today?
32. Why do you think Montag is so upset over Clarisse's absence?
33. Why does Beatty say Clarisse is better off dead? (60)

34. In what ways was Clarisse different from the majority of people Montag meets?
35. According to Beatty, how can people be given happiness and peace? (61)

“If you don’t want a house built, hide the nails and wood. If you don’t want a man unhappy politically, don’t give him two sides to a question to worry him; give him one. Better yet, give him none. Let him forget there is such a thing as war. If the government is inefficient, top heavy, and tax-mad, better it be all those than that people worry over it. Peace, Montag. Give the people contests they win by remembering the words to more popular songs or the names of state capitals or how much corn Iowa grew last year. Cram them full of noncombustible data, chock them so damned full of ‘facts’ they feel stuffed, but absolutely ‘brilliant’ with information. Then they’ll feel they’re thinking, they’ll get a sense of motion without moving. And they’ll be happy, because facts of that sort don’t change...” (61)

What is Beatty advocating for? What is your opinion of his solution for happiness and peace?

36. What do you think the purpose of Beatty’s visit with Montag was? If you were Montag, how would you be feeling after this visit?
37. What does the absence of front porches in the design of homes symbolize? (63)
38. Clarisse had described a past that Montag has never known: one with front porches, gardens, and rocking chairs. What do these items have in common, and how might their removal have encouraged Montag's repressive society?
39. Why is Mildred so upset by the books? (67)
40. Montag’s television includes headphones called “seashells.” The “wall to wall circuit” allows Mildred to enter the “play” and, therefore, the television programming. How does the technology within the novel compare to our current technology? Based on your reading of this first section, does technology improve the quality of life for Montag and Mildred? Why or why not?

Part II: The Sieve and the Sand

1. What is Montag searching for in the books? (73-74)
2. Why do you think Montag remembers trying to fill a sieve with sand at this point? What does this memory symbolize? (78)
3. Faber says that “Christ is one of the ‘family’ now. I often wonder if God recognizes His own son the way we’ve dressed him up, or is it dressed him down? He’s a saccharine when he isn’t making veiled references to certain commercial products that every worshiper absolutely needs.” (81) What point is Faber making? What comparisons can you make to today’s society?
4. Why does Faber call himself a coward? (82) Do you agree that he should be characterized as such? Why or why not? (connect to “First they came for the Jews...”/quotes in activity on apathy)
5. Montag says that “We have everything we need to be happy, but we aren’t happy. Something’s missing.” What do you think is missing? (82) What three things are missing according to Faber?
6. How does Faber define “quality” in a book? How would you define quality?
7. According to Faber, why are books hated and feared? (83)

8. Faber says, "The whole culture's shot through. The skeleton needs melting and reshaping. Good God, it isn't as simple as just picking up a book you laid down half a century ago. Remember, the firemen are rarely necessary. The public itself stopped reading of its own accord. You firemen provide a circus now and then at which buildings are set off and crowds gather for the pretty blaze, but it's a small sideshow indeed, and hardly necessary to keep things in line. So few want to be rebels anymore. And out of those few, most, like myself, scare easily. Can you dance faster than the White Clown, shout louder than 'Mr. Gimmick' and the parlor 'families?' If you can, you'll win your way Montag. In any event, you're a fool. People are having fun." (87)
What message is he sending about the people of this society? Why do you think so few people are interested in being rebels? DO you see any comparisons between today's society and the society Faber is critiquing? Explain.
9. Faber tells Montag, "Don't look to be saved in any one thing, person, machine, or library. Do your own bit of saving, and if you drown, at least die knowing you were headed for shore." How good is this advice in your opinion?
10. Montag says, "I don't want to change sides and just be told what to do. There's no reason to change if I do that." (92) What message is he sending?
11. According to Beatty, what is necessary to keep people happy? Do you agree or disagree and why?
12. What is the response of Mildred's friends when Montag reads "Dover Beach?" Why does Montag kick them out of his house? (100) Do you predict there will be consequences for this action? If so, what consequences?

Part III: Burning Bright

1. Beatty compares Montag to Icarus when he says, "Old Montag wanted to fly near the sun and now that he's burnt his damn wings, he wonders why. Didn't I hint enough when I sent the Hound around your place?" (p.113) Why do you think this comparison is made? How does this shed light on Montag's character and development?
2. What might the Mechanical Hound symbolize? What other symbolism is present throughout the book?
3. What does Granger's reference to the Phoenix symbolize? (p. 163)
4. Granger says, "We're going to meet a lot of lonely people in the next week and the next month and the next year. And when they ask us what we're doing, you can say We're remembering. That's where we'll win out in the long run. And someday we'll remember so much that we'll build the biggest grave of all time and shove war in and cover it up." (164) What does his response of "We're remembering" mean? What commentary is he making about war?
5. Montag's escape out of the city to the peace of the country leads him to discover that "He was not empty. There was more than enough here to fill him." How does his new environment compare to his former life in the city? What influence do books appear to be having on him?
6. Looking back on what you've read regarding Montag's life and Clarisse's life, how have they differed?
7. Reread the detailed description of the Hound (p.24) and the battle (p.120). Why is this moment significant? In what way does Montag's expression of affection for the Hound mark a turning point in his development? What role does affection play in this world? What might be the significance of Montag's final battle with the Hound? you. How did you feel? Did you

express your opposing view, keep it to yourself, or go against your beliefs and agree with the others? Explain.

Activities

1. Focus on the three section titles. Why do you think Bradbury named each section the way he did? Imagine that you have been selected to do an illustration to accompany each of the section title pages. Choose one of the titles and create the illustration you think would best represent it. Your illustration can be literal, abstract, or symbolic.
2. Consider the various conflicts in our world today. Choose one conflict that you are interested in or moved by. Write a paragraph summarizing what you know about the conflict and how you feel about it. Develop a symbol to capture the complexity of the conflict.
3. Imagine you have been hired to remake the movie of Fahrenheit 451. First, choose what you believe to be the three most important moments that take place in the book. In groups, create three movie scenes that stage each scene.
4. Imagine you have been hired to write a sequel to Fahrenheit 451. Think about what would happen after the point when the book ends. What would the beginning, middle, and end of the sequel look like? Write the opening paragraphs to the sequel, making sure you immediately capture the reader's attention.
5. Divide the class into two sides. Tell half the class to assume the character of a government official who strongly believes that censorship and book burning can protect society. The other half of the class should assume the character of a citizen who is passionate about freedom of speech. Have each side take turns presenting arguments in their characters.
6. Rewrite a moment from the novel from a character's perspective other than Montag (i.e. Clarisse, Faber, Beatty, etc.)
7. Write a letter to Captain Beatty responding to his ideas about education and his statement that "a book is a loaded gun" (p.58). Do you agree or disagree with his ideas? In your letter, explain your own ideas about education and the value of books.
8. Design a new cover for Fahrenheit 451.