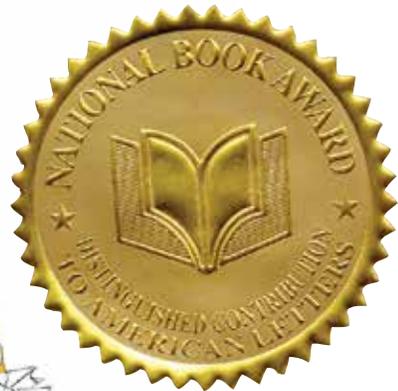


THE TEACHER'S GUIDE TO

# RAY BRADBURY

"Bradbury is a  
true original."  
-*Time*



# FAHRENHEIT 451

BY JEANNE M. MCGLINN

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# INTRODUCTION

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Since 2008 young adult literature has been dominated by dystopian post-apocalyptic novels, fueled in part by the success of *The Hunger Games*. Suzanne Collins's novel led the *New York Times* bestseller list for more than 100 weeks, and the film version, released in 2012, even outdid the Harry Potter films in the US. Most young adults know about Katniss Everdeen and her struggle against the Capitol, which controls the country through state-sanctioned terror. *Fahrenheit 451*, published in 1953, has also had immense popularity. It has over five million copies in print and has recently climbed again to the *New York Times* bestseller list. Like *The Hunger Games*, it is a dystopian novel that explores what can go wrong when a government becomes too controlling of its citizens.

In the classroom this novel will connect students with themes of totalitarianism, alienation, and the individual's struggle to find meaning in life. The novel explores the divided psyche of Montag, who gradually becomes aware of the loss of human feeling in society, and of his own unthinking acceptance of what he has been told. He comes to realize that his work as a fireman who burns books helps enable a government that restricts public discourse and authentic personal relationships in order to exercise control of its citizens. With Montag's dawning awareness comes an idea of personal identity and a sense of responsibility to help regain what society has lost.

This guide to *Fahrenheit 451* is designed to provide teachers with resources and activities to introduce themes and activate background knowledge before reading the novel. During reading discussion questions and reader response quotes can be used to engage students in active reading. Post reading activities and projects suggest ways to deepen responses to the ideas of the novel and to explore connections to other texts and literature. Teachers should select and adapt the activities that best meet their learning goals and the needs and interests of students.

## SYNOPSIS OF THE NOVEL

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*Fahrenheit 451* tells the story of Montag's journey of self-discovery to find meaning in life. The novel is divided into three parts, almost like the three acts of a play, all focused on Montag's growing disillusionment, awareness, and first acts of rebellion.

In part 1, "The Hearth and the Salamander," Montag is unthinking, a fireman who enjoys setting fire to books. Four things happen that shake Montag's certainty: Mildred, his wife, overdoses on pills; Clarisse, a young neighbor, asks questions that shake Montag's composure; Montag overhears Clarisse's uncle analyze the throw-away society in which they live; and Montag begins to question if firemen actually set fires in the past. Sickened when he witnesses the death of a defiant woman who refuses to give up her books, Montag feels alienated from Mildred and from the other firemen. Captain Beatty, aware that Montag has misgivings, tries to argue him into submission by recounting the history of how books became the enemy of mankind.

In part 2, "The Sieve and the Sand," Montag shares with Mildred the books he has been hiding for the past year as he tries to understand why people are willing to die rather than give up their books. Getting nowhere, Montag remembers an old man he met in the park about a year ago, an academic who recited poetry. He decides Faber might help him understand why books are important.

## SYNOPSIS OF THE NOVEL

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Once Faber is convinced Montag means him no harm, he explains that it's not the books that are so important but the ideas they contain. Books are one kind of "receptacle" for ideas which could be "housed" in anything, even the pervasive media of the present day. But, Faber explains, in the past people found ideas too bothersome. Eventually the state decided that ideas caused problems and so should be outlawed. Montag asks Faber to help him learn about ideas so he can make his own choices.

With his resolution and the aid of the transmitted voice of Faber in his ear, Montag challenges his wife's friends, asking them questions about their lives and what they think. Disgusted with their responses, he decides to read them a poem that makes one cry and the other furious. Going to the firehouse, Montag knows he will have a hard time dealing with the arguments of Beatty, and he is soon distraught and paralyzed by the captain's ability to answer any idea with an opposite viewpoint. However, before he can recover, an alarm sounds and the firemen are on the way to a house where books have been reported. Montag is shocked when the fire truck stops at his home.

Part 3, "Burning Bright," is the resolution of Montag's journey to knowledge. Faced with the captain's order that he set fire to his own home to clean up the mess he created, Montag complies. But when Beatty berates Montag and threatens to arrest Faber, Montag pulls the trigger of his flame thrower and sets the captain on fire. Then Montag, having just escaped the Mechanical Hound with a wound to his leg, runs to Faber's house. On the way, he plants some books at the home of a fireman and calls in an alarm, part of his plot to strike back and destroy the profession of firemen.

Faber directs Montag to the river and an escape route while the government sends in a new, more sophisticated version of the Mechanical Hound to pick up Montag's scent. When Montag makes it to the river just in time, the Hound turns back to the city and kills an innocent man as a substitute for Montag. In this way the government shows the public that there is no escape for anyone who attempts to rebel against it.

In the woods, Montag meets refugees who welcome him to their circle. They exchange what they know, each man having memorized a particular book or author. They explain their goal is to save this knowledge until the time when people are ready to hear these ideas again. The next morning, the men witness the bombing and complete annihilation of the city. In that moment Montag remembers parts of Ecclesiastes and Revelations. He realizes he is now ready to face the reality of the world and to share what he knows with others. In the end he leads the way back to the city.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ray Bradbury, who died June 5, 2012, at the age of ninety-one, enjoyed a seventy-year career, starting in 1938 when he published his first short story in a fan magazine. By 1943 he was writing full time and in 1950 he published *The Martian Chronicles*, which established his reputation as a science fiction writer. Soon television and comic book adaptations of his stories appeared. *Fahrenheit 451*, published in 1953, eventually became a modern classic and has been continuously in print ever since. It was originally written and published in 1951 in a shorter version in *Galaxy Science Fiction* called "The Fireman."

The period of the 1950s and 1960s were richly productive for Bradbury. *The Illustrated Man* (1951) and *The Golden Apples of the Sun* (1953), two popular story collections, were soon followed by *The October Country* (1955) and *Dandelion Wine* (1957), an autobiographical novel. In 1962 Bradbury saw the publication of what some consider his most sustained work of fiction, *Something Wicked This Way Comes*. From the mid-1960s on, Bradbury devoted more time to motion picture and stage adaptations of his works as well as poetry and essays.

Bradbury was a prolific writer who wrote every day up until his death (see the list of his novels and short story collections that appears on the first pages of this edition of *Fahrenheit 451*). A recent autobiographical essay by Bradbury appeared on June 4, 2012 in *The New Yorker*:

[www.newyorker.com/reporting/2012/06/04/120604fa\\_fact\\_bradbury](http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2012/06/04/120604fa_fact_bradbury).

In addition, Bradbury's biography is available at multiple websites. Here is a selected list, including several obituaries:

[www.biography.com/people/ray-bradbury-9223240?page=1](http://www.biography.com/people/ray-bradbury-9223240?page=1)

[www.raybradbury.com/bio.html](http://www.raybradbury.com/bio.html)

[www.notablebiographies.com/Be-Br/Bradbury-Ray.html](http://www.notablebiographies.com/Be-Br/Bradbury-Ray.html)

[www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/06/06/ray-bradbury-dead-dies-at-91\\_n\\_1573849.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/06/06/ray-bradbury-dead-dies-at-91_n_1573849.html)

[www.nytimes.com/2012/06/07/books/ray-bradbury-popularizer-of-science-fiction-dies-at-91.html?pagewanted=all](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/07/books/ray-bradbury-popularizer-of-science-fiction-dies-at-91.html?pagewanted=all)

Bradbury's website includes video clips of Bradbury talking about his writing:

[www.raybradbury.com/](http://www.raybradbury.com/)

The Ray Bradbury Navigator provides links to multiple video conversations with Bradbury:

[topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/b/ray\\_bradbury/index.html](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/b/ray_bradbury/index.html)

including this presentation by Bradbury,

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=EzDOYtbViCs](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EzDOYtbViCs)

These sources provide insight into Bradbury's ideas about the art of fiction and his goals as a writer. Ask students to read one of the biographies of Bradbury that are available online in order to learn more about how he approached writing, his influences, and his conception of the role of a writer. Ask students to identify a key quote of Bradbury's on these topics and to copy it on a long thin strip of paper. Hang these quotes around the room and use them to discuss Bradbury's ideas about the craft of writing.



## BEFORE READING: ANTICIPATION GUIDE

These activities are designed to build students' background knowledge about the 1950s and to introduce them to the themes of the novel. They may also be adapted to guide students' thinking while they read the novel.

The purpose of this exercise is to elicit the opinions of students about a variety of themes and topics in the novel. By thinking about and discussing these topics before reading the novel, students will be more sensitive to them while reading. Choose five to seven statements from the list below or develop similar statements. Have students mark the statements as true or false on their own. Then ask students to write freely about the statement to which they reacted the most strongly, either positively or negatively. Students can share their ideas in pairs and then engage in a whole class discussion about their reactions. It is important for the teacher to facilitate discussion without giving her/his own opinion. After reading the novel, the class can return to the statements and discuss whether their opinions have changed and why.

### What's Your Opinion?

- Television is a great source of news about important issues facing the American people.
- Most people in the US spend most of their free time watching TV.
- Control of citizens by the government is fine if it reduces conflict and violence in a country.
- Censorship of books is really not an issue today.
- The great books are essential to enabling humans to be truly happy.
- True happiness consists of having fun with friends.
- The average person in the US is rich compared to the average in other countries.
- Differences in wealth among countries is a source of bitterness and war.
- Watching or playing sports is actually more important than conversations about ideas or world affairs.
- Advances in technology have made life richer and people happier in the US
- People who resist government policies which they think are wrong should be valued by society.

## BEFORE READING: BUILDING BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

### The Atomic Era and the Cold War

Bradbury wrote *Fahrenheit 451* at the beginning of the Atomic Age and the Cold War. On August 6 and 9, 1945 following the successful testing of an A bomb in Trinity, New Mexico, the US dropped two atomic bombs on Japan, resulting in its surrender and the end of WWII. The news that the Soviet Union had its own atomic bomb in 1949 heightened the growing tension between the East and West.

The most famous reference to the growing alienation between the Soviet Union and the West came in a speech delivered by Winston Churchill in 1946 at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri. Churchill described an "iron curtain" dividing central and Eastern Europe from the West:

*From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic an iron curtain has descended across the Continent. Behind that line lie all the capitals of the ancient states of Central and Eastern Europe. Warsaw, Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Budapest, Belgrade, Bucharest, and Sofia, all these famous cities and the populations around them lie in what I must call the Soviet sphere, and all are subject in one form or another, not only to Soviet influence but to a very high and, in some cases, increasing measure of control from Moscow.*

## BEFORE READING: BUILDING BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

Students can read Churchill's complete speech, "Sinews of Peace," at [www.historyguide.org/europe/churchill.html](http://www.historyguide.org/europe/churchill.html) and analyze the political agenda he outlines for the US and its Western allies.

By the fifties, citizens in the US reacted to threats of nuclear war by engaging in civil defense drills and building bomb shelters. Immerse students in the context of these historical events by asking them to engage in a web search for images related to the following topics: Atomic Bomb, Cold War, USSR, Iron Curtain, Civil Defense, Air Raids, Bomb Shelters.

Working in pairs, students can collect images for a PowerPoint or Prezi "scrapbook." Tell students to add brief captions to explain the image or their reactions. PowerPoints and Prezis can be shared in small groups or as a whole class. Discuss the similarities and differences among the images chosen by the students. How do these images suggest the political context of the period of the early 1950s? How might people have been reacting to global pressures in the post-WWII era in the US and why? What evidence do the images provide about the post-war psyche?

### McCarthyism

1. The threat of communism reached its highest level of hysteria in 1950 when a young senator from Wisconsin, Joseph McCarthy, claimed that he had a list of 205 communist sympathizers who had infiltrated the State Department. For a complete history of this era, including video excerpts of McCarthy's hearings and the broadcast of Edward R. Morrow, *See It Now*, that finally exposed McCarthy's tactics, students can visit the following website: [www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/USAmccarthyism.htm](http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/USAmccarthyism.htm).

Assign pairs of students to collect facts on different topics, such as: the Un-American Activities Committee, the Hollywood Ten, American Communist Party, Joseph McCarthy, and Edward R. Murrow. Students can post these facts on an online blog available to all members of the class or they can create poster-size charts that can be displayed around the classroom.

If the students create charts, they can engage in a "walk-around" to review and add to the information based on the research they have done. After students have reviewed all the information, they can choose one of the topics to summarize by creating a word cloud using Wordle at [www.wordle.net/](http://www.wordle.net/).

2. Most students have some background knowledge about the Salem witch trials. Ask students to brainstorm and create a class graphic organizer for what they know about the trials. Discuss why they think certain people were identified as witches in the community. What was it about these persons that led to them being identified?

Having read or discussed McCarthyism, do the students see any connections between the Salem witch trials and what happened in the 1950s? Are there similar "witch hunts" going on today? Who are the targets of these attacks? Why are certain groups identified as "dangerous" to the American Way?

Recently in 2012 US House Representative Michele Bachmann made claims that the Muslim Brotherhood, an international Islamist Movement that came to power in Egypt in 2012, has agents inside the US government, and she called for an investigation of five federal agencies. News reports about her accusations are available at several sources on the Web, including [www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/07/10/michele-bachmann-muslim-brotherhood\\_n\\_1661532.html?utm\\_hp\\_ref=politics](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/07/10/michele-bachmann-muslim-brotherhood_n_1661532.html?utm_hp_ref=politics).

After reading the article, ask students to create a comparison-contrast graphic organizer in which they present the essential elements of McCarthy's accusations next to Bachmann's. Then discuss with students the similarities and differences between the two accusations. Are the accusations justified or not?

## BEFORE READING: BUILDING BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

3. Some students may have read Arthur Miller's play, *The Crucible*, or seen the 1996 film version of the play that depicts the Salem witch trials and Miller's analysis of what led the community to turn against certain people. Arthur Miller explains why he wrote *The Crucible* and his own brush with the McCarthy hearings in an essay published in *The Guardian*, June 16, 2000: [www.guardian.co.uk/books/2000/jun/17/history.politics](http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2000/jun/17/history.politics).

Ask students to read this essay and then engage in a dialogue about their responses to Miller. Ask students to create a foldable journal by folding their paper into four columns. In the first column they should write down what they learned in the essay and their initial reactions. Then exchange the journal with another student who writes his/her response to the first student's ideas. The journals are returned and students read and respond to what the partner has written in the third column. Journals are exchanged one more time, giving the partner one more opportunity to read and respond to the comments. When journals are returned, students can read through the exchange of ideas. As a class, share the main ideas discussed and how one's thinking changed or developed during the "conversation."

### Popular Culture in the US at the Beginning of the Fifties

1. What was life like in the early 1950s? Following the end of WWII, the US experienced an optimism and economic boom that laid the foundation for life as we know it today in the twenty-first century—the population shift to the suburbs, the growth of media culture, the expansion of super-highways, the emphasis on youth culture, and the growth of the consumer economy.

Students can start to explore this era by researching one or more of the following topics:

- Popular toys, technology, and entertainers of the 1950s at [www.thepeoplehistory.com/1950s.html](http://www.thepeoplehistory.com/1950s.html)
- History of TV at [www.tvhistory.tv/1950%20QF.htm](http://www.tvhistory.tv/1950%20QF.htm)
- Images and ads depicting male and female roles at [www.businesspundit.com/10-most-sexist-printads-from-the-1950s/](http://www.businesspundit.com/10-most-sexist-printads-from-the-1950s/)

After researching the fifties, ask students to create a multimedia poster using Glogster at [edu.glogster.com/](http://edu.glogster.com/). This platform enables students to display information using video, graphics, images, sounds, drawing, and text.

2. Ask students to create oral histories of the fifties by interviewing family members or other adults who grew up then. Students should prepare for the interviews by brainstorming as a class the topics they want to research. Then students in small groups can develop questions for each topic. Students should review interviewing skills, such as how to set up and prepare for the interview, how to interact with the person they are interviewing, how to take notes, and how to respond once the interview is completed. Since students' oral skills will benefit from practice, students can pair up to role play and practice the interview questions.

An overview of oral histories is available at [dohistory.org/on\\_your\\_own/toolkit/oralHistory.html](http://dohistory.org/on_your_own/toolkit/oralHistory.html).

Examples of oral histories can be found at the Documenting the American South website: [docsouth.unc.edu/sohp/women.html](http://docsouth.unc.edu/sohp/women.html).

# BEFORE READING: BUILDING BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

## Interdisciplinary Connections: The Physics of Fire

Does paper burn at 451 degrees Fahrenheit? Skype with an expert from a local university who can explain the physical and chemical changes that occur when paper burns or set up a free account and find expert contacts at [www.skype.com/intl/en-us/home](http://www.skype.com/intl/en-us/home).

You can also invite an expert at your school, a physics or chemistry teacher, to speak with your students. There are a variety of wiki and other websites where the question of the ignition point for paper is discussed. For example, [www.ask.com/questions-about/Temperature-Which-Paper-Burns](http://www.ask.com/questions-about/Temperature-Which-Paper-Burns). Other websites on the physics of fire include: [www.cbsnews.com/8301-504784\\_162-20106378-10391705.html](http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-504784_162-20106378-10391705.html) and [www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/physics/science-fire.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/physics/science-fire.html).

## Utopian/Dystopian Literature

1. Have students as a whole class brainstorm what they understand about the idea of utopia and by contrast dystopia by creating graphic organizers for each term.

You may wish to draw on students' initial ideas to develop some of the following points:

- A utopia is an ideal community or society that sets out to create a perfect socio-politico-legal system; citizens in this community enjoy equality and cooperate together to ensure the success of the community.
- The term utopia was first used by Sir Thomas More in 1516 for his book, taken from the Greek word which has a double meaning—no place or good place.
- Plato's *Republic* describes a utopian community based on the stratification of citizens in gold, silver, and bronze socioeconomic classes.
- Different types of utopias are based on an underlying philosophical idea. For example economic utopias are generally against commerce and capitalism and call for equitable distribution of goods and work and abolition of money. Religious utopias attempt to establish communities of virtue. Scientific or technological utopias set in the future demonstrate the results of advanced scientific or technological changes. Feminist utopias explore changes in the idea of gender with single gender or single-sex societies.
- In dystopias social control often trumps other ideals, leading to authoritarian rule and coercion.

After students have shared what they know about the concepts of Utopia and Dystopia, direct students to read one of the following passages which describes utopian communities and add ideas to the class graphic organizer: the chapter from Book II of More's *Utopia* 1516, *Of Their Trades, and Manner of Life* (available online at [oregonstate.edu/instruct/phl302/texts/more/utopia-contents.html](http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/phl302/texts/more/utopia-contents.html)); or Chapters 17 and 18 *Travels in El Dorado* from Voltaire's *Candide* 1759 (available on line at [www.literature.org/authors/voltaire/candide/chapter-17.html](http://www.literature.org/authors/voltaire/candide/chapter-17.html)).

Discuss as a class the students' reactions to the ideas of utopia/dystopia. Do students think a utopian society, such as those described by More or Voltaire, will work? Why/why not? What will work in its favor? What will cause difficulties? Are these ideals bound to fail? Could these ideas be taken too far and end up having a negative effect? If utopias are supposed to be idealized communities that promote the common good and the development of the individual, what happens that leads to a completely opposite result, repressive social control? What has led to the modern interest in depicting dystopias?

# INITIAL EXPLORATION OF THEMES

These activities encourage students to begin to explore the themes of the novel before reading. Select the key themes you plan to discuss and choose the activities that will work most effectively with your group of students. Once your students have a general understanding of each theme, you can ask them to trace the themes and their changing perceptions as they read in a reader response journal or on Post-it notes, which they attach to specific passages in the novel. Or ask the class to create a poster for each theme, where students list significant quotes and interpretations. Use this activity to focus students' discussion on how their perceptions change as they read the novel.

## The Search for Happiness

The first time Montag meets Clarisse McClellan, she asks him if he is happy. Thus Bradbury introduces philosophical questions that resonate throughout the novel—what is true happiness and what makes life worth living? Ask students to begin to explore these questions before reading the novel. Pose the question: what makes you happy? First ask the students to write freely about a time when they felt truly happy. Ask them to recreate the time and scene: what were they doing; where were they; who were they with; what made them happy; how lasting was their happiness? Tell students the goal of this writing is to recreate in narrative detail the events of this “happy” moment.

Ask students to share their “stories” with a partner first and then ask volunteers to share their stories with the class. Discuss with the class the elements of happiness that are common to the stories. What is it that makes people happy and that makes happiness last? What is the difference between “fun” or pleasure and “happiness”?

## Alienation

1. Alienation is the feeling of being cut off from oneself, from others, and from a sense of the meaning of life. Students may have experienced one or more of these conditions. To get at their understanding of alienation, have the class create a graphic organizer for the word. Ask students to brainstorm a list of words that define alienation. Then ask them individually to divide a sheet of paper in half. In one column ask them to list examples of alienation and in the other column to list non-examples. Share these examples with the class and discuss: What factors lead to a sense of alienation? How can a person overcome these feelings?
2. Bureaucracies or authoritarian systems can create a sense of alienation when persons believe there is little they can do to go against the status quo or change the system. Ask students if they have ever encountered a bureaucracy. It can be something small—like the rules and regulations at a fitness center or an encounter with the justice system. Ask students to discuss how they felt and what they did. Did they feel alienated? If so, how did they deal with these feelings?
3. Read the poem “Richard Cory” by E.A. Robinson out loud to your students while they read along. Ask them to re-read the poem and to respond by choosing the most important line or phrase in the poem and writing a journal in which they explain their selection. You can also play the recording of the poem by Simon and Garfunkle to give students a third reading of the poem. Discuss: What shows Richard Cory's alienation? What may be the cause of his feelings? Why does he make the choice he does? What else could he have done?

Another famous poem about alienation is T.S. Eliot's “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock.” After the oral reading of the poem, ask students to re-read the poem selecting images Prufrock uses to describe himself. Have the students copy these lines over the outline of a man. Discuss: why does Prufrock feel this way? What does he want from life? Why is he unable to get what he wants and needs? What does Eliot suggest about the condition of modern man?

## INITIAL EXPLORATION OF THEMES

These poems may seem very bleak to students. Ask students to discuss: Have they ever had similar feelings to the characters in the poems? If so, how have they dealt with these feelings? A follow up to this discussion is to have students write a letter to one of the characters suggesting ways of dealing with the character's feelings of alienation.

4. "The Unknown Citizen" by W. H. Auden explores the condition of modern man—both the impact of bureaucracy and loss of identity and the question of the meaning of life. After reading the poem out loud at least twice, ask students to list the characteristics of the "unknown citizen." What did he do, what did he have, how did he live? Is the poet listing "good" things about this citizen or is the poet ironic? How? What is the poet critiquing about modern life?
5. Contemporary drama of the twentieth century often dealt with the theme of alienation. Select a scene of dialogue from the screen versions of Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (2001; director Michael Lindsay-Hogg) or Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* (1966; director Mike Nichols). Ask students to focus on the relationship of the characters. Are they communicating? What are the barriers to their communication? How do they relate to each other? What are the issues they seem to be facing in their lives and why?

Engage students in a class discussion about alienation: What are the factors in our lives that tend to alienate us from others? What makes it difficult to have conversations with others in which we discuss personally important issues and ideas? What might a person do to overcome the sources of alienation in her/his life?

### Censorship and the Power of Books

1. Present students with an unlabeled list of 10-20 books selected from rolls of commonly censored books. Lists are available at several sites online, including the American Library Association's ([www.ala.org/advocacy/banned/frequentlychallenged/challengedclassics/](http://www.ala.org/advocacy/banned/frequentlychallenged/challengedclassics/)) or [www.ala.org/advocacy/banned/frequentlychallenged/21stcenturychallenged/](http://www.ala.org/advocacy/banned/frequentlychallenged/21stcenturychallenged/). Ask students to identify which books have been censored and which have not. If they are very savvy they may realize that all the books on your short list have been banned. If so, ask them to select the book they are most surprised to see on the list and to write down 2-3 reasons why they don't think the book should be censored.
2. Teachers and media coordinators are charged to select appropriate curricular materials. Ask students to consider the difference between "selection" and censorship or banning of materials by making a list of ideas in two columns, titled: Selecting Educational Materials and Banning Materials. Discuss as a group students' ideas about the difference between selection and censorship: What is the goal of a professional teacher or media specialist when they are selecting school materials? What is the goal of a person who is requesting removal of materials?

To help students make these lists, you can share with them the media selection policies that guide professionals at your school. These policies are usually set by the school board and may be available online or through the media specialist in your school.

3. Recently, *The Hunger Games* joined the Harry Potter and the Twilight series on lists of most frequently challenged books. See the report from the American Library Association at [www.ala.org/news/mediapresscenter/americanlibraries/soal2012/executive-summary](http://www.ala.org/news/mediapresscenter/americanlibraries/soal2012/executive-summary). Discuss with students why books are challenged and who challenges books? To help students learn more about the issues of censorship, ask them to read one or more websites, such as [www.ala.org/advocacy/banned/aboutbannedbooks](http://www.ala.org/advocacy/banned/aboutbannedbooks).

# INITIAL EXPLORATION OF THEMES

Since so many students are familiar with one or more of these highly popular YA novels, ask them to compose a rationale promoting one of these books for young adults. First have students read “How to Write a Rationale” at the National Council of Teachers of English website ([www.ncte.org/action/anti-censorship/rationales](http://www.ncte.org/action/anti-censorship/rationales)), which indicates that a rationale has five basic parts:

- the bibliographic citation and intended level of readers;
- a brief summary of the text;
- the reason for using the work and how it will be used in the classroom;
- a list of problems that might occur when using this text and solutions; and
- suggestions of alternative works that a student might read.

Have students share their rationales and develop lists of the strongest arguments for supporting the non-censorship of a particular book. Discuss with students how writing a rationale for a book makes them aware of censorship issues.

4. Is censorship ever permissible? Ask students to engage in a Constructive Controversy to argue the pros and cons of censorship. Divide students into groups of four who will debate each other in pairs. One side will debate the pro side that censorship is permissible while the con side will argue that censorship is never permissible. First, ask students to develop arguments for their point of view. Pairs present their arguments, each side having 4-5 minutes. Then pairs take the opposite point of view. Since they have heard the strongest arguments of the other side, they can build on these to argue their new position. Again have groups present their best arguments.

Following the conversations, ask students to write a defense for their personal point of view about censorship, using and building on the arguments students have presented in the debate.

5. In 1943 the US Office of War Information used a poster of a Nazi book burning to bolster support for the war. Ask students to view this poster at the American Library Association website on book burning and to discuss their reactions:

[https://www.ala.org/ala/aboutala/offices/oif/bannedbooksweek/bookburning/holocaust\\_poster.pdf](https://www.ala.org/ala/aboutala/offices/oif/bannedbooksweek/bookburning/holocaust_poster.pdf).

There have been some modern-day book burnings: a church in Florida planned to burn the Quran ([articles.cnn.com/2010-07-29/us/florida.burn.quran.day\\_1\\_quran-burning-florida-church-terry-jones-american-muslims-religion?\\_s=PM:US](http://articles.cnn.com/2010-07-29/us/florida.burn.quran.day_1_quran-burning-florida-church-terry-jones-american-muslims-religion?_s=PM:US)) and two Michigan pastors in 2003 burned copies of *Harry Potter* ([www.forbes.com/2006/11/30/book-burnings-potter-tech-media\\_cz\\_ds\\_books06\\_1201burn.html](http://www.forbes.com/2006/11/30/book-burnings-potter-tech-media_cz_ds_books06_1201burn.html)).

Discuss with students the reasons people would consider burning books. What do the book burners hope will happen? Why do they feel that it is important to burn books? What can be the consequences of their actions? What is the impact of burning books compared to just banning books?

## Role of Science and Technology

Writing in 1951 Bradbury was able to anticipate technological innovations of the twenty-first century, such as flat screen televisions, digital music, surveillance devices, and advances in medical technology. Engage students in predicting their world in the next thirty to forty years. What technologies do they think will become common and how will these technologies impact their lives in both positive and negative ways?

# INITIAL EXPLORATION OF THEMES

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Students can first engage in research about trends in future technological innovations by searching on [money.cnn.com](http://money.cnn.com), which looks at trends in all areas. Here are a few examples:

- Future of money payments:  
[money.cnn.com/video/technology/2012/01/25/an\\_level\\_up\\_scvngr.cnnmoney/](http://money.cnn.com/video/technology/2012/01/25/an_level_up_scvngr.cnnmoney/)
- Future transportation:  
[money.cnn.com/video/technology/2011/10/11/ts\\_giro\\_car.cnnmoney/](http://money.cnn.com/video/technology/2011/10/11/ts_giro_car.cnnmoney/)
- Future kitchen technology:  
[money.cnn.com/video/technology/2011/09/22/t\\_myhrvold\\_future\\_kitchen.cnnmoney/](http://money.cnn.com/video/technology/2011/09/22/t_myhrvold_future_kitchen.cnnmoney/)

Then ask students in pairs to choose one area of innovation to research. After reading Web articles, ask students to brainstorm the pros and cons of a particular innovation. How will life change for people as a result of this technology? What will be gained? What will be lost?

Then ask students to create a print or video advertisement for this new technology. First have students select an ad in a magazine or on TV. Have them identify what makes the ad effective, and then have them create their own ad employing a similar technique. Students can share these ads and predict what innovations they think will come first and why.

# READER RESPONSE AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The following quotes and discussion questions will stimulate students to deepen their analysis of the novel and to draw on the background developed through pre-reading discussions and activities. Discussion Questions and Reader Response Quotes can be used in a variety of ways for whole class, small group, and individual analysis. For example, you may choose to use one of the discussion questions as a quick, open-ended writing prompt at the beginning of the class. Then you can ask students to share their responses with a partner or you can build the whole-class discussion on students' ideas.

The quotes listed here can be used for the open-ended writings or oral discussions. Students can also be encouraged to select their own quotes from each section of the reading. Students can respond to quotes in a double-entry journal. Instruct students to draw a vertical line down the page. On one side they should copy the quote they have selected and on the other side of the line, they should explain what the quote means to them. They can explain why they chose the quote or how it adds to their understanding of the novel.

## **"The Hearth and the Salamander" Discussion Questions**

1. Why does Montag grin with a "fierce grin" (p. 2) before and after he is fighting fires?
2. Describe Clarisse—how does she look and act? How is her face like a candle in the light it gives off? Give specific details.
3. What is the effect of Clarisse's questions on Montag? Why do her questions have this effect?
4. Compare Montag's wife, Mildred, with Clarisse. Are they alike in any way? How are they different?
5. What is Montag's reaction when he discovers his wife has taken an overdose of sleeping pills? Why does he react this way? Does he love his wife?
6. What is the effect of the wall-sized TVs on Mildred? What kinds of programs are playing on them?
7. Why are Clarisse and Montag fascinated with each other? What do they find attractive; what do they find upsetting about each other?
8. Why does the mechanical hound growl and threaten Montag?
9. Clarisse says, "I haven't any friends. That's supposed to prove I'm abnormal" (p. 27). Is Clarisse abnormal? What does she do that keeps people her own age from relating to her?
10. There is a list of a million forbidden books (p. 31) on the firehouse wall. What type of books are probably on this list, and why?
11. In a book in the house he has come to burn, Montag reads, "Time has fallen asleep in the afternoon sunshine" (p. 34). How does this line affect him, and why?
12. Why does Beatty call books a "Tower of Babel" (p. 35)?
13. When Montag returns home after the house and book burning and the death of the woman, he makes "soft sounds." What are these sounds, and why is he making them?
14. What does Mildred say when Montag tells her about the death of the old woman when they burned her books? What does Mildred's response say about her? What has led Mildred to become the way she is?
15. According to Beatty, the numbers of different minorities were a problem because they caused controversy (p. 54). How does the society try to eliminate controversy, and how effective are they in achieving this goal?
16. According to Beatty, what happened to books and magazines in the twentieth century? What forces contributed to this change?

## READER RESPONSE AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

17. How do firemen act as "...custodians of our peace of mind" (p. 56)?
18. According to Beatty, what is the effect on the human psyche of reading the classic books?
19. How does Mildred get rid of her frustrations and negative feelings? Does she resolve these negative feelings or just escape them? Explain your answer.
20. Montag tells Mildred, "I need you so much right now..." (p. 64). What does he need? What is he seeking to attain with his wife?

### **"The Hearth and the Salamander" Reader Response Quotes**

"It was a pleasure to burn. It was a special pleasure to see things eaten, to see things blackened and changed" (p. 1).

"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. 9).

"There are too many of us....There are billions of us and that's too many. Nobody knows anyone" (p. 14).

"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" (p. 21).

"I'm afraid of children my own age. They kill each other. Did it always use to be that way?...I'm afraid of them and they don't like me because I'm afraid" (p. 27).

"Had he ever seen a fireman that didn't have black hair, black brows, a fiery face, and a blue-steel shaved but unshaved look? These men were all mirror images of himself!" (p. 30).

"And he remembered thinking then that if she [Mildred] 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..." (p. 41).

"We need not to be let alone. We need to be really bothered once in a while. How long is it since you were really bothered? About something important, about something real?" (p. 49).

"People want to be happy....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" (p. 56).

"Any man who can take a TV wall apart and put it back together again, and most men can, nowadays, is happier than any man who tries to slide rule, measure, and equate the universe, which just won't be measured or equated without making man feel bestial and lonely" (p. 58).

"We've got to start somewhere here, figuring out why we're in such a mess, you and the medicine nights, and the car, and me and my work....We haven't anything to go on, but maybe we can piece it out and figure it and help each other" (p. 63-64).

# READER RESPONSE AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

## “The Sieve and the Sand” Discussion Questions

1. In thinking about Clarisse’s friendship and her death, Montag goes “...trembling along the hall to the kitchen” (p. 68). Why has his brief interaction with her made such an impact on him?
2. How does Montag answer Mildred when she asks why she should read? What does their exchange indicate about the differences between them?
3. Although Montag’s country has won “two atomic wars since 2022” (p. 69), the threat of another war grows stronger. What reason does Montag give for the country being hated so much? How might books help Montag’s countrymen relate to peoples of other countries?
4. How does the sieve and the sand analogy apply to Montag?
5. When Montag visits Faber, Faber calls himself a coward. Why? In what way has he acted cowardly?
6. Faber tells Montag; “It’s not books you need, it’s some of the things that once were in books” (p. 78). What is it that Montag needs and is searching for?
7. According to Faber, what three things are necessary to the pursuit of happiness? To what degree has Montag gained each of these three factors in his life at this point of the novel?
8. Why is Faber so discouraged about changing society for the better even if a war wipes out the current culture in their country?
9. Why does Montag not heed Faber’s warnings and instead confronts the women in his house with a reading of “Dover Beach”?
10. When Montag returns to the firehouse for work, he is divided. What are the divisions within himself that he experiences?
11. The Captain recounts his dream in which he defeats Montag’s argument for the importance of books. Choose one of the Captain’s quotes that directly argues against the power of books and explain what the quote means.
12. How does Montag feel about himself as he rides the fire truck with the other men to burn more books?

## “The Sieve and the Sand” Reader Response Quotes

“Maybe the books can get us half out of the cave. They just might stop us from making the same damn insane mistakes!” (p. 70).

“The train radio vomited upon Montag, in retaliation, a great tonload of music made of tin, copper, silver, chromium, and brass. The people were pounded into submission; they did not run, there was no place to run...” (p. 75).

“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 regular peppermint stick now, all sugar-crystal and saccharine when he isn’t making veiled references to certain commercial products that every worshiper absolutely needs” (p. 77-78).

“I’m one of the innocents who could have spoken up and out when no one would listen to the ‘guilty,’ but I did not speak and thus became guilty myself” (p. 78).

“Books were only one type of receptacle where we stored a lot of things we were afraid we might forget. There is nothing magical in them, at all. The magic is only in what books say, how they stitched the patches of the universe together in one garment for us” (p. 79).

# READER RESPONSE AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

"The things you're looking for, Montag, are in the world, but the only way the average chap will ever see ninety-nine percent of them is in a book. Don't ask for guarantees. And 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" (p. 82).

"Those who don't build must burn. It's as old as history and juvenile delinquents" (p. 85).

"If you hide your ignorance, no one will hit you and you'll never learn" (p. 100).

## "Burning Bright" Discussion Questions

1. What do you think caused Mildred to bring about the destruction of her own house by reporting that her husband had hidden books?
2. Why does Beatty want Montag to wield the flame thrower to destroy his own house and why does Montag acquiesce?
3. Almost without knowing it, Montag's hands switch off the safety on the flame thrower aimed at Beatty. What does this show about Montag's state of awareness or consciousness?
4. Why do you think Beatty mockingly tells Montag to "pull the trigger" (p. 113) on the flame thrower Montag has aimed at him?
5. Is Montag justified in killing Beatty? Why or why not?
6. Why do the teenagers in the car try to kill Montag as he crosses the avenue? How do their actions reflect what is happening in society?
7. What is fitting about Montag's planting books in Fireman Black's home?
8. What insight about himself does Montag gain as he reflects on his violent actions?
9. Even though war has been declared, the news media focuses on the Mechanical Hound's tracking of Montag. What does this say about the function of the media in society?
10. If Montag were caught and dying, what single word or phrase do you think he could say to the TV cameras that would wake the people up to the enforced triviality of their lives?
11. What insight about time and the sun and his actions as a fireman does Montag get during his leisurely float on the river? What does Montag understand humans must do to counter the effects of the time-burning sun?
12. How is the campfire different from the burning fire with which Montag is familiar?
13. What is so remarkable to Montag about the voices around the campfire he hears as he hides in the trees?
14. How is Montag like the men he encounters gathered around the campfire?
15. How do the old men hope to use the books they have memorized, and what do they think will happen?
16. What makes the war and its end so unreal to Montag and his companions?
17. What do Montag's imaginings about Mildred's fate when the bombs fall indicate about him?
18. What, according to Granger, makes humans different from the Phoenix? How will this help humankind finally?
19. Why do you think that the old men fall in behind Montag on their journey back to the city. Why has he become the leader?
20. What is the significance of the quote that Montag will save for noon when they reach the city?

# READER RESPONSE AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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## **"Burning Bright" Reader Response Quotes**

"It was pretty silly, quoting poetry around free and easy like that. It was the act of a silly damn snob. Give a man a few lines of verse and he thinks he's the Lord of all Creation" (p. 111).

"Faber's would be the place where he might refuel his fast draining belief in his own ability to survive. He just wanted to know that there was a man like Faber in the world" (p. 118).

"I could feel it for a long time, I was saving something up, I went around doing one thing and feeling another....It's a wonder it didn't show on me, like fat" (p. 125).

"He could feel the Hound, like autumn, come cold and dry and swift....The Hound did not touch the world. It carried its silence with it, so you could feel the silence building up a pressure behind you all across town" (p. 130).

"Here was the path to wherever he was going. Here was the single familiar thing, the magic charm he might need a little while, to touch, to feel beneath his feet, as he moved on into the bramble bushes and the lakes of smelling and feeling and touching, among the whispers and the blowing down of leaves" (p. 138).

"The most important single thing we had to pound into ourselves is that we were not important....We're nothing more than dust jackets for books, of no significance otherwise" (p. 146).

"Everyone must leave something behind when he dies....A child or a book or a painting or a house or a wall built or a pair of shoes made. Or a garden planted. Something your hand touched some way so your soul has somewhere to go when you die, and when people look at that tree or that flower you planted, you're there" (p. 149-150).

"We'll just start walking today and see the world and the way the world walks around and talks, the way it really looks....And while none of it will be me when it goes in, after a while it'll all gather together inside and it'll be me" (p. 154).

## AFTER READING ACTIVITIES

After reading the entire novel, students are ready to explore its artistry and discuss its themes in greater depth. The questions and activities listed here are designed to encourage students to re-read parts of the novel, to make connections, and to draw inferences based on their background knowledge and critical thinking. The discussion questions can be used for whole class, small group, or writing topics.

### Deepening Understanding and Making Connections

1. Compare Clarisse and Mildred with respect to their physical appearance, what they enjoy doing, and how they relate to Montag.
2. Analyze Beatty's character. What has happened to him? Why does he want to burn books? Does he really want to die as Montag thinks? Why would he? What is his world view in the end?
3. Compare Montag with Beatty. How are they alike and how are they different in terms of their world view, their motivation, and their moral character?
4. In the course of the novel, Montag undergoes some major changes in his understanding and in how he conducts his life. In an essay analyze and discuss the changes in Montag's awareness about himself and about the world he lives in and the corresponding changes in his behaviors as a result of his increased awareness.
5. Trace the image of fire from the opening page of the novel to Montag's encounters with fire at the wilderness camps. How is fire used as a symbol in the novel?
6. In an interview on National Public Radio's *Fresh Air*, Bradbury said that he is never negative about the future of our society; if a story is pessimistic, he offers solutions, suggestions about what should be done to change and improve things. What is Bradbury's solution to totalitarian regimes? What is the individual's responsibility as a citizen? How realistic do you find his solution in the novel? Why?
7. In the same interview Bradbury said that writers should only write what is true. Can you apply this criteria to *Fahrenheit 451*? In what ways does the novel present the truth? First explain what you understand is true and then identify examples in the novel that demonstrate truth.
8. The novel shows advances in technology affecting the lives of the characters. Describe some of these advances and how the technology is beneficial or problematic in the lives of the characters.
9. Discuss how Montag's initial condition applies to your sense of yourself in the world. In what ways is your life similar to Montag's? How different? Do you experience similar feelings of alienation from friends, fellow students, parents or other adults? How do you deal with feelings of alienation?
10. At the end of the novel Montag joins the people in the wilderness who believe their most important act is to keep books alive by memorizing them. If you were one of these people, what literary, philosophical or other text(s) would you memorize? Explain your choice. What is it about the text that makes it important that it should survive?
11. Nature is contrasted with the city near the end of the novel with the conclusion that nature will survive no matter what humans do to themselves. Discuss what is unnatural in Montag's society and possible solutions to the problems of society that would be in harmony with the natural world.
12. Describe the novel's commentary about war. What are its causes? How do citizens respond when war is declared? What are the individual and community effects of war?

# AFTER READING ACTIVITIES

## Group and Individual Projects

These projects, which can be completed independently or in small groups, will enable the students to make connections to other media and literature. Choose and adapt these activities to meet your learning goals and your students' needs and abilities.

1. *Fahrenheit 451* uses poetic language and images, reflecting Bradbury's dedication to selecting the precise words to tell his stories. Collect words and phrases from the novel to write a "found poem" about a particular theme or character. For more information and examples of found poems, go to: [www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/5780](http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/5780).
2. Conduct a Constructive Controversy to debate the proposition: "Humans should have time to read and reflect on the great books of the world." Divide students into groups of four who will debate each other in pairs. One side will debate the pro side and the other the con side.

Have students in the con group list the arguments against reading the great works made by Beatty and those in the pro group the arguments for reading the great works made by Faber and others in the novel. Have students add their personal arguments to the lists. Then have students argue the proposition within their groups of four. Give five minutes for each side to make their case. When the conversations subside, have the pairs switch sides. Give them a few minutes in their pairs to marshal the most telling arguments and then have them debate the opposite side of the question with each other.

After this second exchange, have a whole class discussion about the proposition. What are the most telling arguments pro and con? What examples are there of great works that support either side? Do students think that after the war in *Fahrenheit 451* things will be better when books are once again shared with the people?

This activity can be followed up with students writing a journal entry or a more formal essay in which they argue their own opinion about the proposition.

3. Have students go back to "The Unknown Citizen" by W. H. Auden or read it for the first time. After discussing the literal meaning of the poem as a whole class, ask students to work in groups to compare the poem with the novel. How is the life of the citizen in the poem similar to and different from what is expected of a citizen in the novel?
4. In 1992 Noel Perrin added a chapter to his book, *Dr. Bowdler's Legacy* (originally published by Atheneum in 1969; published in 1992 by David R. Godine, Publisher), to determine if bowdlerism, the prudish expurgation of a literary work, had diminished since 1969 when he published his original study. While he found that school text books were less likely to use expurgated literary texts, there were still many cases in which publishers had changed or eliminated "offensive" words without informing readers. One case is particularly striking—the expurgated text of *Fahrenheit 451*.

Ballantine Books published a special high school edition of *Fahrenheit 451* in 1967 (which eventually ran to ten printings) in which they changed about a hundred passages. They continued to sell the original in bookstores for adults until 1973 when it was replaced by the expurgated edition. No one noticed until 1979 when Bradbury found out and demanded that Ballantine print only the original novel for both high school students and adults.

Ask students to discuss the pros and cons of this approach to literature for young adults. Is there any justification for altering a text to protect young adults from certain words or ideas? Who determines what is acceptable for young adults? What is gained or lost in this process of changing text?

Follow up with a discussion of the pro and con arguments for the censorship of books. Ask: Should books ever be censored from the adult reading public? If not, why should adults have access to all that has been written? If censorship is appropriate for some books, what criteria would you use to censor books? Who would determine the criteria? How could you ensure that criteria are just or equitable?

## AFTER READING ACTIVITIES

5. Go back to the Anticipation Guide questions used as a prereading activity. Ask students to answer the True/False questions again. Have them discuss their answers as a whole class and identify any questions on which their opinions may have changed after reading the novel.
6. Ask students to create a dramatic monologue for a character of their choice. They can be Montag, Clarisse, the Captain, or one of the minor characters in the novel. Students can begin to draft their monologues by going back through the novel and collecting dialogue in which the character speaks or is spoken about. They can use the character's own words in a monologue that describes how they see the events that unfolded in the novel.  
  
Students can present their monologues in small groups. Then ask for volunteers for each of the characters. Discuss with the class the different interpretations of the characters presented in the monologues.
7. Ask students to engage in a creative writing about the novel. They can choose one of these prompts:  
  
Imagine and write an episode at the end of the novel which shows Montag a few months later encountering a group of citizens. They have been working to rebuild the city and are resting after dinner. In his conversation with them, he recites "Dover Beach" or some other piece of literature that the student thinks appropriate. How do the survivors respond? What do they say to him? How do they act?  
  
Imagine and write a dialogue for the end of the novel in which Montag meets Clarisse. How do they meet? How do they feel about finding each other? What do they say?  
  
Have all of the students share their writing in pairs and, afterwards, ask for volunteers to read their writing to the whole class.
8. Students can create imaginative Facebook profiles for Montag, Mildred, Clarisse, or the Captain by listing their education, marital status, favorite songs, quotes, television shows, books, movies, main interests, and causes. Students can read each other's profiles and post responses, in character. For example, how would Mildred respond to Montag's post that he likes "Dover Beach" and that's why he read it to her friends? See samples and create fake walls for free at [www.classtools.net/fb/home/page/](http://www.classtools.net/fb/home/page/)
9. After discussing with students the use of music and visuals to create a representation of the themes and nuances of the novel, ask them to create a music and video presentation for *Fahrenheit 451*. Students select music and images from the Internet and Animoto puts them together in a professional-looking presentation. Sample presentations and registration instructions can be found at [animoto.com/](http://animoto.com/).
10. Ray Bradbury worked throughout his life to support libraries. In his biography he talks about the authors he met in the library and how access to books was such a crucial part of his growth as a person and writer. In the twenty-first century many cities and states are considering closing libraries due to lower tax revenues. Ask students to weigh in on this issue. As future citizens would they vote to raise taxes to support libraries? Why or why not? What ideas from the novel could they use to support their point of view? After students have formulated their ideas as class, ask them to write a brief editorial or opinion piece. Post and share these on the class website.
11. Analyze and compare the content and techniques of TV news and entertainment shows in the novel with that of a specific newscast and entertainment show today. What is the depth of coverage of the subject matter? What techniques are used to attract and engage the interests of viewers? Also, compare the effects on viewers of the shows. To what extent has the future projected in the novel come true today?
12. Ask students to read Bradbury's short story "The Toynbee Convector" about a time traveler who brings hope to his contemporaries from 100 years in the future by sharing images of a peaceful and bountiful world. Ask students how the short story is connected to the themes of *Fahrenheit 451*. What message of hope do they find in these two texts? (The story can be found in a collection of short stories with the same title published by Knopf in 1988.)

## USING OTHER RESOURCES

### The Film

Francois Truffaut wrote and directed a film version of *Fahrenheit 451* in 1966; it was his first and only English language film. Jean-Louis Richard collaborated on the screenplay with Truffaut. The film starred Oskar Werner as Montag, Julie Christie as Clarisse/Linda Montag, and Cyril Cusack as the Captain.

1. Before viewing selected scenes from the film, ask students to play the role of a casting director. Based on their reading of the novel, what type of actor would they audition to play Montag, Clarisee, or the Captain? What would the actor look like—physical type, voice, other characteristics? Students can draw or write a description of the character they choose.

Then after watching the first part of the film where the three main characters are introduced, ask students how their choices for the actors match those of the director. In what ways do the film actors meet or not meet their ideas and expectations for the characters?

2. The trailer for the 1966 film is available on YouTube at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=M9n98SXNGI8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M9n98SXNGI8)  
Watch the trailer with the class and ask students what the trailer suggests about the content of the film. What expectations are set up about the themes of the movie? What do they notice might not be the same as in the novel?
3. Ask students to write a film review after watching several key scenes of *Fahrenheit 451*: Montag's first meeting with Clarisse; the book burning and death of the woman who refuses to leave her books; the burning of Montag's home and books; the end of the film with the "book" people.

Discuss with the students the elements of a good film review. You can bring in copies of the local newspaper's film review section and ask students to read several reviews and list the elements that are common to the reviews. Good guidelines for film reviews are provided at this website:

[www2.athabasca.ca/services/write-site/film-review.php](http://www2.athabasca.ca/services/write-site/film-review.php)

Once students understand the elements of a successful review, ask them to draft their review of the scenes they have viewed. They can use the guidelines as a formative assessment tool to help add details to their reviews. Students may need to view some scenes a second time.

4. Which is better—the film or the book? After watching selected scenes from the film, ask students to compile a list of reasons why the film or the novel is better than the other. Once students have brainstormed a list, the whole class can create a comparison/contrast graphic organizer based on the ideas generated by the students. Then take a poll of the class. What percentage favor the film or the novel?
5. Some interesting trivia about the film can be viewed at "Did You Know" at [www.imdb.com/title/tt0060390/](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0060390/)

## USING OTHER RESOURCES

### Fahrenheit 451: The Graphic Novel

In 2009 artist Tim Hamilton adapted Bradbury's novel into graphic novel format. An article at NPR ([www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=106929166](http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=106929166)) describes Hamilton's process. The radio program can be heard at [www.npr.org/player/v2/mediaPlayer.html?action=1&t=1&islist=false&id=106929166&m=111388864](http://www.npr.org/player/v2/mediaPlayer.html?action=1&t=1&islist=false&id=106929166&m=111388864).

Bring in the graphic novel, and using a document camera, display several key scenes in the novel. In case the graphic novel is unavailable, you can use online sources. Five pages of the adaptation are available at the NPR website. In the review, Lynn Neary quotes book review and NPR comic blogger Glen Weldon, who says graphic novels are based on a tension between text and image. The artist sets out to do more than just illustrate the novelist's words. According to Weldon, "You're taking this prose—and in the case of *Fahrenheit 451*, it's Bradbury prose, so it's very rich, it's very evocative, it's filled with figurative language—and you're transforming it. You're not simply taking Bradbury's prose, cutting and pasting it into a book and running pictures around it."

Based on the pages they are able to view, do students agree that the artist is using image to extend the words of the text? Ask students to provide examples of what the artist adds to the story.

You could also ask students to act like a graphic artist by choosing one scene from the novel, and drawing their own representation of the scene. Then have students share and explain their ideas and design to a partner or the class.

## READING OTHER DYSTOPIAN NOVELS

As noted in the Introduction to this guide, writers of young adult fiction have created a number of novels depicting dystopian future worlds. Recently published novels, in addition to *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins, include Ally Condie's *Matched*, Jeanne DuPrau's *The City of Ember*, Lauren Oliver's *Delirium*, Scott Westerfeld's *Uglies*, Veronica Roth's *Divergent*, Pam Bachorz's *Candor*, Gemma Malley's *The Declaration*, and *Unwind* by Neal Shusterman. These novels join the perennial classics, *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley and *1984* by George Orwell, which are frequently on reading lists for high school students.

Display the novels and invite students to survey them over several days. Then assign students to select and read one of the novels and create a Book Talk, a short (3-4 minutes maximum) introduction to a book which is designed to stimulate interest and motivate readers. Book Talks include the following:

- an engaging opening (a "hook") that creates interest and includes the author's name and title of the book;
- a few details of the plot but avoids summarizing the plot or revealing the ending;
- a focus on one important idea or theme.

The talk can include the use of a prop connected to the story or the reading of a brief selection from the text. It is important that the talk entertain and entice readers to want to read the book. Students must use good presentation skills when giving the Book Talk: maintain eye contact and good posture, enunciate clearly, and vary voice level.

# LITERATURE CIRCLE AND YOUNG ADULT FICTION ON CENSORSHIP

Literature circles are small discussion groups in which each student prepares a specific role for the discussion, and everyone comes to the group with notes and materials to share with the group and add to the discussion. Common roles for a Literature Circle include: Discussion Director, Quote Collector, Connector, Illustrator, Travel Tracer. Role sheets can be found and adapted from various sites on the Web; for example [www.ipadlitcircles.com/uploads/1/0/6/6/10664962/lit\\_circles.role\\_sheets.pdf](http://www.ipadlitcircles.com/uploads/1/0/6/6/10664962/lit_circles.role_sheets.pdf).

Teachers can select from the following list of annotated books on the issue of censorship. The age-appropriate reading level of each book is indicated.

**Facklam, Margery. *The Trouble with Mothers*. Clarion Books, 1989. Middle School.**

Major Madison comes to town with his Crusade for a Clean America and starts a campaign to remove “questionable books” from the school. Soon Luke Troy is fielding insults about his mother, a romance writer and history teacher, and her “dirty books.” When he reads her book—not just the “racy” parts—he realizes that she had to describe rape to tell the violent story of slavery. Luke also realizes that Madison did not read the book either; Madison just believes he can save people from the evil in books.

**Miles, Betty. *Maudie and Me and the Dirty Book*. Knopf, 1980. Middle School.**

Kate volunteers for a reading program that pairs sixth grade readers with a first grade class. She is surprised when the only other volunteer is Maudie, a girl she has never hung out with before. Then to make matters worse, Kate chooses a book about how puppies are born and the first graders ask many curious questions. Soon parents are calling to complain that young children have “been exposed to explicit sex materials and that reading lists for older kids were full of...trash” (94), and a campaign to censor books for objectionable material is started. Kate defends her choice for the children at a public forum on the issue. Miles addresses common arguments for and against censorship of children’s reading material.

**Hentoff, Nat. *The Day They Came to Arrest the Book*. Dell Publishing, 1982. High School.**

When a history teacher assigns *Huckleberry Finn*, a black student is offended by racist terms and shows the book to his father. The parent demands that the book be “eliminated” from the class, the library, and the high school. The principal hopes to side step a controversy by getting the history teacher to stop teaching the book. However, the teacher insists that the school go through the established procedure for reviewing book censorship cases.

The recommended book review procedure is followed, including the complaint from the parent and the pro and con discussion before a committee of school and community representatives. Hentoff includes an intelligent discussion of civil rights from both the liberal and conservative point of view.

**Lasky, Kathryn. *Memoirs of a Bookbat*. Harcourt Brace, 1994. High School.**

Ninth grader Harper has learned how to live a lie for four years, ever since her parents became missionaries for Family Action for Christian Education and Families Involved in Saving Traditional Values. They have been traveling from town to town, challenging instructional materials and practices in the local schools. Harper hides her reading and her love of books since her parents are afraid of their influence on her mind. She worries about her younger sister who is indoctrinated to form a Jesus Club in her third grade and recruited for an antiabortion march. Finally she realizes that she cannot hide her true feelings or not express her own point of view just to keep peace in the family. Lasky explores the problems with self-righteous people who think they are the only ones with access to truth.

# LITERATURE CIRCLE AND YOUNG ADULT FICTION ON CENSORSHIP

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**Neufeld, John.** *A Small Civil War*. Simon & Schuster, 1996. High School.

Neufeld based this novel on a real censorship case in 1980 over *The Grapes of Wrath*. Thirteen-year-old Georgia takes a leadership role when members of the city council start a campaign to ban the book. Soon the town is divided into two opposed camps, leading to heated exchanges of rhetoric and even several acts of violence. Neufeld presents the point of view of both sides since Georgia's mother and father take opposite sides in the controversy. The town votes to ban the book and Georgia pledges to continue the fight for freedom from censorship.

**Garden, Nancy.** *The Year They Burned the Books*. Farrar Straus Giroux, 1999. High School

Condom distribution and the sex education curriculum fuel a controversy in a small New England town where a student news reporter is censored and books are burned.

**Peck, Richard.** *The Last Safe Place on Earth*. Laurel Leaf, 2005. Middle School

An extreme fundamentalist baby sitter brainwashes a child to fear Halloween in this study of censorship and fanaticism.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ON RAY BRADBURY

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Bradbury, Ray. *Dandelion Wine* (Autobiographical novel, 1957). Spectra, revised edition, 1985.

Bradbury, Ray. *Bradbury Speaks: Too Soon from the Cave, Too Far from the Stars*. Harper Perennial, 2006

Bradbury, Ray. Interview on Fresh Air with Terry Gross, November 17, 2000

[www.npr.org/player/v2/mediaPlayer.html?action=1&t=1&islist=false&id=1114088&m=114088](http://www.npr.org/player/v2/mediaPlayer.html?action=1&t=1&islist=false&id=1114088&m=114088)

Bradbury, Ray. *Zen in the Art of Writing: Essays on Creativity*. Joshua Odell Editions, 1994.

Center for Ray Bradbury Studies at Indiana University, Indiana University-Purdue

University Indianapolis at [www.iupui.edu/~crbs/home.html](http://www.iupui.edu/~crbs/home.html)

Eller, Jonathan R. *Becoming Ray Bradbury*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011.

National Endowment for the Arts. "The Big Read: *Fahrenheit 451*" available at [www.neabigread.org/books/fahrenheit451/](http://www.neabigread.org/books/fahrenheit451/)

Weller, Sam. *Listen to the Echoes: The Ray Bradbury Interviews*. Stop Smiling Books, 2010.

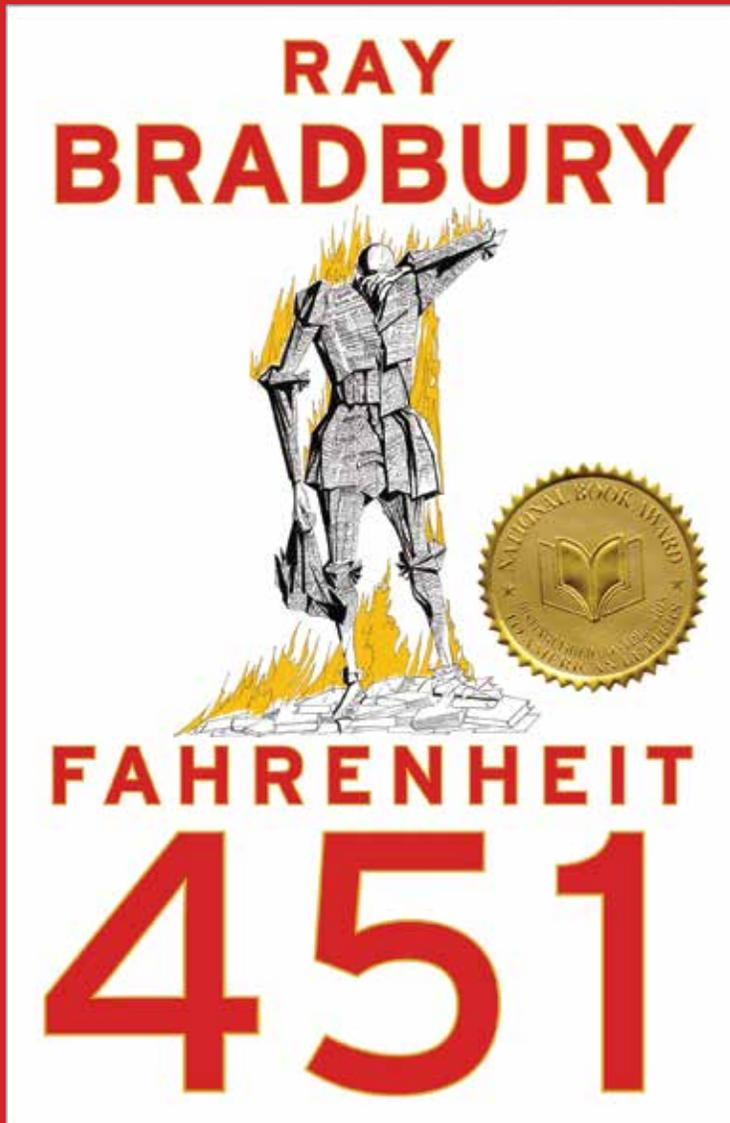
## ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THIS GUIDE

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**Jeanne M. McGlenn**, Professor in the Department of Education at the University of North Carolina at Asheville, teaches Children's and Adolescent Literature and directs the field experiences of 9-12 English licensure candidates. She is the editor of the *Language Experience Forum Journal* for the Language Experience Special Interest Group of IRA. She has written and edited a series of guides to classical and contemporary works of literature published by Penguin. She also writes extensively in the field of adolescent literature, including a critical book on the historical fiction of adolescent writer Ann Rinaldi for Scarecrow Press Young Adult Writers series.

# ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Ray Bradbury's internationally acclaimed novel *Fahrenheit 451* is a masterwork of twentieth-century literature set in a bleak, dystopian future. This teacher's guide is designed to offer insight into the exploration of this classic in the classroom.



The activities described in the Teacher's Guide to *Fahrenheit 451* meet multiple Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts, Grades 6-12 in reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

Students are asked to cite textual evidence that supports their analysis of the text. They determine the theme or central ideas of the novel by analyzing the impact of particular incidents and dialogue. They trace the development of characters over the course of the novel. They compare and contrast different texts. Activities on the film version of the novel require students to analyze the director's choices in making the film and its faithfulness to the text.

Response activities require students to write explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas. Students will utilize the Internet as a source of information and also to produce and publish written products. Discussion activities will lead students to engage in a range of collaborative discussions to strengthen speaking and listening skills.

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