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Prestwick House
Literature
Teaching Unit
Chapter-by-Chapter Study Guide



Fahrenheit 451

by Ray Bradbury

- Learning objectives
- Study Guide with short-answer questions
- Background information
- Vocabulary in context
- Multiple-choice test
- Essay questions
- Literary terms



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Fahrenheit 451

Objectives

By the end of this Unit the students will be able to:

1. identify the main themes of the story.
2. discuss elements in the story that classify it as science fiction.
3. develop a character sketch of Montag, Mildred, Beatty, and Faber.
4. cite static and dynamic characters and give reasons for their classifications.
5. discuss the role of a hero in a story and identify heroes and anti-heroes in this story.
6. discuss the symbolism used in Fahrenheit 451.
7. analyze the concepts of conformity and rebellion as illustrated in the book.
8. give a chronological summary of the story.
9. discuss the concepts of utopian and dystopian society and cite instances of both types of depictions in the story.
10. discuss the role and importance of propaganda in the story, citing incidents including the Seashell, the televisor set-up in the parlor walls, and the televised chase for Montag.

Fahrenheit 451

Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. Fahrenheit 451 was first published in 1950. Discuss developments in the story that have come into mainstream society. Do these developments make the story seem more or less believable to you? Explain why.
2. Contrast Mildred's use of the Seashell with Montag's use of the device Faber invented. One device was treated in the story as evil or negative, and one was portrayed as helpful. Explain the different moral presentations of the devices, their uses, and their importance to the story.
3. Discuss the use of symbols in the story, including the phoenix, the salamander, and the number 451.
4. Analyze the character of Captain Beatty. Include his role as the captain in the firehouse, his meeting to counsel Montag, his use of literary quotations, his library, and his death.
5. Contrast Clarisse McClellan and Mildred Montag.
6. Remembering that this novel was written in 1950, contrast the treatment of women in the story with the role of women in society today.
7. Discuss your personal opinion of how Fahrenheit 451 describes—or contrasts with—the world today.
8. Discuss the use of the Mechanical Hound in the three sections of the story.
9. Discuss the quotation, "Play the man, Master Ridley; we shall this day light such a candle, by God's grace, in England, as I trust shall never be put out." Discuss the initial use of the quotation and how it could later be applied to other incidents in the story.
10. Discuss Faber's analysis of Jesus.
11. Faber instructs Montag in the three elements needed for happiness. Show how Montag acquires or recognizes these elements in the course of the story.
12. A society is called Utopian when it strives for the happiness of all its citizens. Two different societies are portrayed in the novel: the mainstream society and the society of the literary men in the woods. Discuss both in terms of the Utopian model, showing how they aim for the happiness of those who live there, and how they succeed or fail.
13. Trace the development of Montag's character from being a rather anonymous fireman to being a rebel to being a leader of those who survive the war.
14. Suggest other appropriate titles for this novel.

stolid – unemotional

stratum – a layer

tactile –related to the sense of touch; inviting to touch

tamped – gently pressed in

theremin – an early electronic instrument

titillation – arousal; stimulation

1. What does the author indicate about the importance of the number 451 and the fireman's job.

2. How does this introduction go against conventional wisdom and signal to the reader that a different value system will be introduced?

3. How does the author indicate that Montag has a daring—or rebellious—streak in his character?

4. According to Greek myth, the salamander is able to live in a fire without being hurt, and the phoenix lives for 500 years before dying in a fire and being regenerated from the fire. Why would Montag have these symbols on his clothing?

22. What is Mildred's reaction when Montag reads from the first book? What does this indicate about Mildred's character?

23. What is the significance of the sentence Montag reads about people dying rather than breaking the small ends of eggs?

24. What are some of the science fiction elements depicted in this section of the book?

25. What thematic concepts have been introduced in the story so far?

9. Why does Montag think books could make him happy?

10. Faber says that books themselves are not the key to happiness, but three other factors are. What factors does Faber cite as being crucial to happiness?

11. Explain what Faber means by quality of information.

12. What does Faber mean by leisure?

13. What is Faber's third factor required for happiness?

14. How does Montag coerce Faber into becoming his teacher?

15. How does Faber equip Montag to deal with Captain Beatty?
