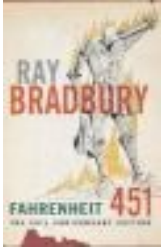


Books by the Stack



Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury

A classic novel set in the future when books forbidden by a totalitarian regime are burned. The hero, a book burner, suddenly discovers that books are flesh and blood ideas that cry out silently when put to the torch.

Why you'll like it: Character-driven. World-building. Atmospheric. Thought-provoking.

About the Author: In a career spanning more than seventy years, Ray Bradbury, who died on June 5, 2011, at the age of 91, inspired generations of readers to dream, think, and create. A prolific author of hundreds of short stories and close to fifty books, as well as numerous poems, essays, operas, plays, teleplays, and screenplays, Bradbury was one of the most celebrated writers of our time.

Questions for Discussion

1. Why would society make "being a pedestrian" a crime? (Clarisse tells Montag that her uncle was once arrested for this.)
2. One suicide and one near-suicide occur in this book. One woman, who shuns books but loves TV and driving fast in her car, anesthetizes herself; "We get these cases nine or ten a night," says the medical technician. Another woman, who cherishes her books, sets herself on fire with them; "These fanatics always try suicide," says the fire captain. Why would two people who seem to be so different from each other try to take their own lives? Why does suicide happen so frequently in Montag's society?"
3. Captain Beatty quotes history, scripture, poetry, philosophy. He is obviously a well-read man. Why hasn't he been punished? And why does he view the books he's read with such contempt?
4. Beatty tells Montag that firemen are "custodians of peace of mind" and that they stand against "those who want to make everyone unhappy with conflicting theory and thought." How well are the firemen accomplishing these objectives? Are conflicting ideas the only source of unhappiness in their society? What other sources might there be? Can conflicting ideas exist even without books that have been destroyed and outlawed?
5. Why do you think the firemen's rulebook credited Benjamin Franklin-- writer, publisher, political leader, inventor, ambassador--as being the first fireman?
6. Why does Beatty program the Hound to track Montag even before Montag stole the book? Do you believe Beatty had seen him steal books before? Or is it that Beatty had detected a change in Montag's attitude or behavior?

7. Montag turns to books to rescue him; instead they help demolish his life -- he loses his wife, job and home; he kills a man and is forced to be a nomad. Does he gain any benefits from books? If so, what are they?
8. Do you believe, as Montag did, that Beatty wanted to die? If so, why do you think so?
9. Since the government is so opposed to readers, thinkers, walkers, and slow drivers, why does it allow the procession of men along the railroad tracks to exist?
10. Once Montag becomes a violent revolutionary, why does the government purposely capture an innocent man in his place instead of tracking down the real Montag? Might the government believe that Montag is no longer a threat?
11. Granger, spokesperson for the group on the railroad tracks, tells Montag, "Right now we have a horrible job; we're waiting for the war to begin and, as quickly, end...When the war's over, perhaps we can be of some use in the world." Based on what you've read of the world these men live in, do you believe that the books they carry inside themselves will make a difference? Might this difference be positive or negative? Point out episodes in *Fahrenheit* to support your response.
12. What does Granger mean when he says, "We're going to go build a mirror factory first and put out nothing but mirrors for the next year and take a long time to look at them?" Why would "mirrors" be important in this new society? (Note: In Part 1, Clarisse is said to be "like a mirror.")

(Questions issued by publisher)



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