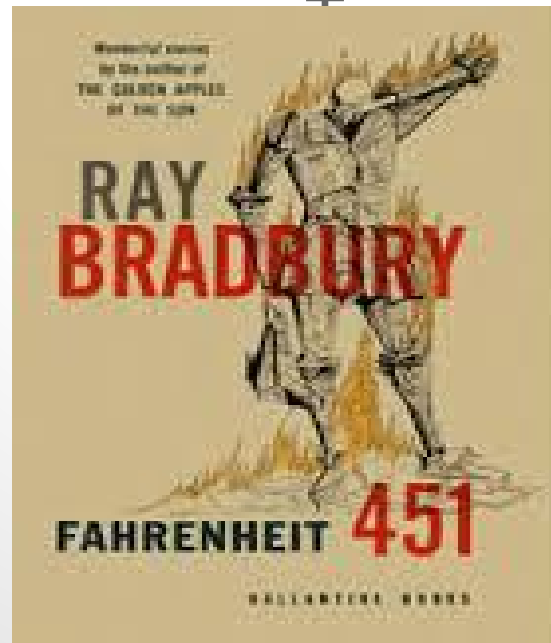


Fahrenheit 451

9/25/13 - Period 8 - Group 4

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What makes Montag a rebel?



Consider the quote on p.55, in which Montag says: “Let you alone! That’s all very well, but how can I leave myself alone? We need not to be alone. We need to be really bothered once in awhile. How long is it since you were really bothered? About something important, about something real?”

a.) Montag is trying to remind Mildred and himself that people cannot experience true happiness if sadness doesn’t exist. The government makes the population believe that they are content by distracting them with technological comforts, which they eventually prioritize over things such as family and education. However, sometimes the citizens need to be surprised and bothered by truth, even if it’s truth that they don’t want to hear. Knowing about the government’s corrupt behavior and motivations is the only way to reduce the excessive control and regain basic human rights, such as individual thought.

b.) This quote is relevant to themes in the novel, such as: Knowledge vs. Ignorance, and Censorship. The novel is centered around the tension between the citizens who believe that ignorance is bliss and the minority who believe that knowledge is power. The majority of people think that the government is doing them a favor by taking away personal freedoms. They believe that ignorance is the key to a peaceful society and that being “bothered” by anything will only cause disputes and rifts between people. However, a minority of people, such as Montag and Granger, believe that life should be filled with curiosity. Being fed lies by the government and kept restrained at all times prevents the citizens from experiencing the happiness of diversity and freethought.

c.) This quote is also relevant to themes that we will be exploring, such as Perspectives. One of the main problems of the novel, censorship, can be viewed in two ways- you can support it, or be opposed it. However, saying that one group is correct without considering the perspective of the other group will only result in endless, narrow-minded arguing.

Symbolism



The Hearth and the Salamander:

The hearth and the salamander is a symbol for Montag's life at home and at work. A hearth is the same thing as a fireplace, which symbolizes home and the salamander is the official symbol for the fireman and it's even what they call their trucks. Both of these things have to do with fire, which is the main thing in Montag's life. The hearth contains the fire that heats a home while according to ancient beliefs a salamander lives in fire and is unaffected by it. In the beginning of the novel Montag describes his love for fire and the pride he takes in his work. He loves to see things changed by fire and loves the smell of kerosene that never washes off of him.

The Sieve and the Sand:

The chapter title "The Sieve and the Sand" comes from a childhood memory of Montag's. When he was little he tried to put sand into a sieve and every time he did, it just fell through the holes. He tried to put more and more in as fast as he could but the sand never stayed in the sieve. He compares this experience with the one he has on the subway going to meet Faber. On his way there he believes he has the only bible left in existence so he starts to try and memorize it. There is a jingle on in the subway for an advertisement and Montag can't concentrate. He tries to read as fast as he can so he can retain as much of the book as possible but he is unable to hang onto the words. The sieve and the sand becomes a metaphor for this situation. The sand is all the information that Montag wants to know, mainly from the books. The sieve represents the human mind and how it is unable to grasp anything in this society and all of the information just slips through.

Burning bright:

There is a lot of symbolism in Fahrenheit 451 to go with burning bright. It is mainly a symbol for fire which is in the entire book but it uses a different meaning every time. Beatty and the firemen use fire to destroy books and knowledge and it makes fire seem like a bad thing, but in the end of the book when the men are sitting around the fire Montag realizes it can be used to warm and not destroy which is a good thing. Another meaning can be throughout the book Montag learns more and more about his society and what it means to live that he becomes burning bright with knowledge. It also relates to the metaphor of the phoenix Granger used in the end of the book. After the city goes up in flames he says it will rise again from its own ashes. Although the city was up in flames it had a bright future because it could now rebuild and start over.

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Relevance today

3. Fahrenheit 451 was published in 1953, but remains very relevant today.

a) What does Fahrenheit 451 suggest about the power of media and government?

Fahrenheit 451 suggests that when given too much authority, governments can exploit their power and use it in negative ways against the governed. By controlling media, the government in Fahrenheit 451 gave the public a distorted view of what was really happening in their society. Everyone believed they were happy because they were told that they were, but really, there was more violence and crime than ever. Some radicals, like Montag, realized how unhappy they actually were living in this "utopia."

b) Do you think this kind of world is possible? To what extent is it happening today? Explain.

This kind of world is possible because there are elements of the novel existing in everyday life. Libraries, school districts, and certain portions of the government ban books because of their content.

c) BONUS: Find a contemporary example or recent news item that relates to Fahrenheit 451.

District 41 in Illinois recently banned The Perks of Being a Wallflower because of the very mature and sometimes disturbing content. By banning the book, some parents and teachers hope to prevent their children and students from learning about some of the things which come along with growing up too early. Similar to the government in Fahrenheit 451, by banning the book in the schools, the authority is stopping the people from reading something different and new. In comparison with Montag, some administrators believe that there is no problem with the book because people are not as innocent as they seem. Knowledge should be available to everyone and the people can make the choice if they want to learn or not.

A quote that relates from Fahrenheit 451 is: "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." Pg. 61

(<http://glenellyn.patch.com/groups/schools/p/parents-object-to-perks-of-being-a-wallflower>)



Allusion

“Compare Winston Noble to Hubert Hoag for ten seconds and you can almost figure the results.” (97)

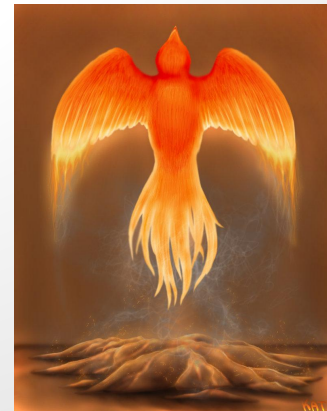
This is a possible allusion to politics in more present times where sometimes candidates are chosen due to their physical appearance.

“Do you know the legend of Hercules and Antaeus, the giant wrestler, whose strength was incredible so long as he stood firmly on the earth?” (83)

A Greek myth about how Antaeus was defeated by Hercules because Hercules held him from the ground much like how people from the society in Fahrenheit 451 are being kept from the truth.

“Phoenix...every time he burnt himself up he sprang out of the ashes, he got himself born all over again. And it looks like we're doing the same thing” (163)

This alludes to the myth of phoenixes and how they destroy themselves only to be born again from the ashes.



Themes



5. Themes

a) Life depends on knowledge, if we are ignorant and unhappy we might as well be dead- Throughout the novel, Bradbury addresses life and death multiple times. For example, Montag's wife tries to attempt suicide by swallowing sleeping pills. Many people die in the novel. The old woman burns herself to death with her books, Clarisse is killed by a speeding car, Montag kills Beatty with the flamethrower, and the Mechanical Hound kills an innocent man. Among all the destruction, Montag survives while, the city and everyone he knew there are destroyed. Montag's interest in knowledge and dedication to a new and better society saves him. Bradbury seems to suggest that life is dependent on knowledge and awareness. If we become empty and unhappy, we might as well be dead.

"Somewhere the saving and putting away had to begin again and someone had to do the saving and keeping, one way or another, in books, in records, in people's heads, any way at all so long as it was safe, free from moths, silver-fish, rust and dry-rot, and men with matches." pg.78

b) Technology can have a negative effect on society- Technology plays a big role in Fahrenheit 451. For example, television screens take up entire parlor room walls, seashell radios can broadcast into people's ears throughout the day, and people drive cars at speeds of 150mph and above. Also, people rely on inventions such as the Mechanical Hound and the snake-like tool used to save Millie's life after her suicide attempt. Technology dominates society. When he finally escapes his old life, the city is destroyed by atomic bombs (another example of negative technology), and Montag begins a simple life with a small amount of technological tools as he sets out to rebuild society. Bradbury is showing the negative influence technological development can have in the world and society.

"The zipper displaces the button and a man lacks just that much time to think while dressing at dawn, a philosophical hour, and thus a melancholy hour." pg. 56

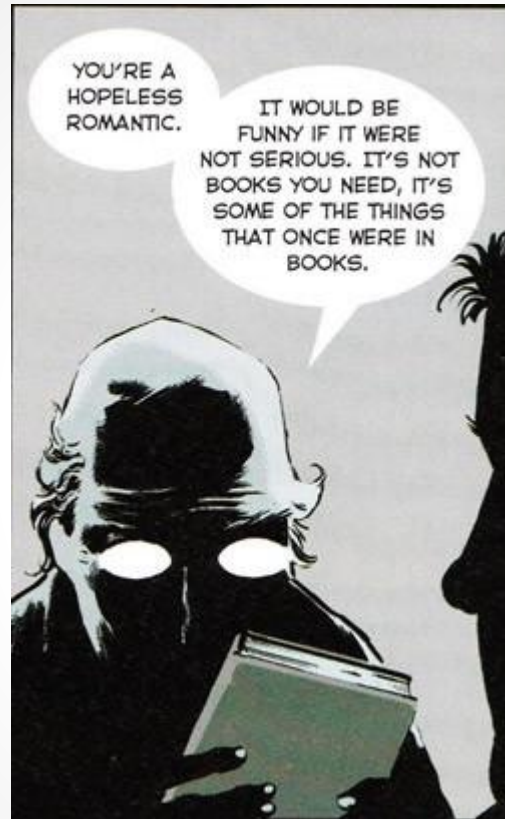
Related Quotes

“There must be something in books, something we can’t imagine, to make a woman stay in a burning house; there must be something there. You don’t stay for nothing.” pg. 51



The relationship between *fear* and *censorship* is significant. When books are challenged or banned, it’s usually because people are afraid those books will negatively influence the readers.

“What could he say in a single word, a few words, that would sear all their faces and wake them up?” pg. 135



Restricting people's rights and freedom will eventually lead to a rebellion, it just takes someone like Guy to find a way to wake everyone else up.