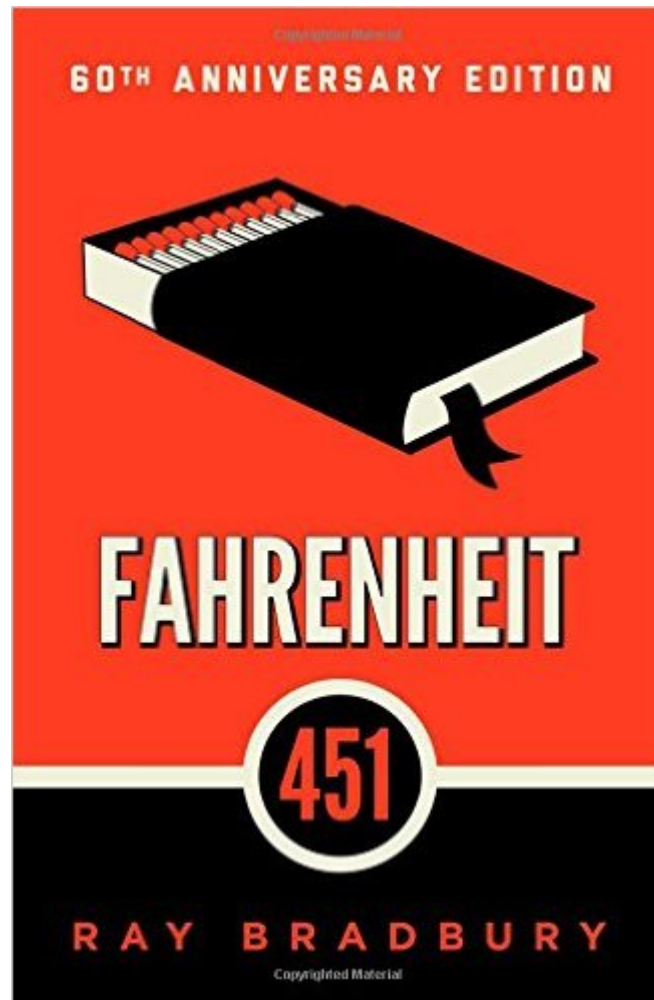


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Fahrenheit 451: A Novel



Synopsis

Ray Bradbury's internationally acclaimed novel Fahrenheit 451 is a masterwork of twentieth-century literature set in a bleak, dystopian future. Guy Montag is a fireman. In his world, where television rules and literature is on the brink of extinction, firemen start fires rather than put them out. His job is to destroy the most illegal of commodities, the printed book, along with the houses in which they are hidden. Montag never questions the destruction and ruin his actions produce, returning each day to his bland life and wife, Mildred, who spends all day with her television "family." But then he meets an eccentric young neighbor, Clarisse, who introduces him to a past where people didn't live in fear and to a present where one sees the world through the ideas in books instead of the mindless chatter of television. When Mildred attempts suicide and Clarisse suddenly disappears, Montag begins to question everything he has ever known. He starts hiding books in his home, and when his pilfering is discovered, the fireman has to run for his life.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book is absolutely amazing. It describes a time in the future where censorship prevails and minds are caged. Nobody has original thoughts; with the abolishing of books creativity was lost as well. Guy Montag, the protagonist, is a fireman (firemen burn books in this story) who has to fight to pull himself from the grip of an overpowering government and tradition, only to see that it is all useless (why teach to people who can't understand?). The novel shows what censorship can do to a society, and why individuals must not accept the norm without questioning its integrity and implications. Overall, read this book immediately and apply what you learn from it into everyday

life. By the way, ignore all of the reviewers that gave the book a low score because they could not understand the plot and symbolism. Their comments are similar to saying Shakespeare's works are poorly written because he uses odd vocabulary and the plot is too complex. Unfortunately, these people make up the mass of society, which is why these reviews are commonplace. (The funny thing is, the novel specifically targets these kind of people...)

When I began teaching three years ago, I was required to teach this book. Having never read it before, I began reading it just before our winter break. As I soaked up the story of the book, I realized my students were already living it. They begged me daily, "Ms. Hill, why do we have to read this stupid book? Can't we just watch the movie?" As I got deeper and deeper into the book, I grew increasingly depressed about the future of the world. Then I realized: Bradbury has given me a picture of what might be, if we are not careful. His book written nearly fifty years ago peers just twenty minutes into the future now. Technological developments he had no name for then are very real today. For example, his seashell radio is clearly the walkman many of us see pressed in the ears of teenagers daily. TV screens are growing larger and larger and flat screens with HDTV are on the market now. The next step is clearly the full wall television of Mildred's parlor. Robot dogs like Aibo are just a hop skip and a jump away from the dreaded hound. But this is a future preventable. Maybe. But if popular culture is constantly valued above thoughtful consideration and education, we'll march right into a land of burning books and intellectualism on the run. Bradbury's book made me feel defiant. They could never take my books from me. They could burn me with them if they want, but that's what it'll take before I give up my freedom to think for myself. And as for my students, they remind me every day what an uphill battle I have been sent to fight.

"Fahrenheit 451" is a simply great book. Yes, it's quite distressing and unpleasant to read - because what Bradbury describes is much closer to truth than we'd like it to be. And that is precisely what makes the reality of the book so alike our own - it's more pleasant not to think about such things, and therefore one can merely say the book doesn't suit one's taste and go 'get entertained' in front of the TV. The disturbing thing about the book is that, unlike many other books that deal with the distant future, "Fahrenheit 451" (written in 1953) hasn't been proved wrong simply by time itself. Not at all. Actually, what is shocking to realize is that we've come quite close to the society Bradbury writes about. Perhaps books haven't been banned yet, but it is indeed the entertainment industry that controls people's minds, the political correctness has reached ridiculous levels, there are ads everywhere and now we even have Segways so that we don't have to walk anywhere... And, of

course, we can get a thousand page long classics shortened to a hundred pages - or, better yet, simply watch the movie. The book also has other qualities besides making one think (which is, judging by some other reviews, one of its biggest downsides). One cannot but admire the brilliant way Bradbury uses absurd and creates a completely surreal feeling by using the methods of expressionism to describe the feelings and thoughts of the main character. Bradbury sure had things to write about - and that can be proved by even something as simple as the fact I've spent the last half an hour writing a review on the Internet rather than reading a good book or looking at the world...

I read this book about 18 months ago, but I am writing a review now because the book came up during a mealtime conversation. We talked about how prophetic a very good science fiction writer can be. This is definitely the case in Bradbury's Fahrenheit 451. Guy Montag lives in a world that represses freedom of speech, creativity, and the core of human spirit. People, including his estranged wife, are drones glued to these pseudo realities in television. It describes senseless trivia shows (can anyone say "Who wants to be a millionaire?") and awfully realistic soap operas that his wife affectionately refers to as the "family." What is most disturbing is that as televisions and technology become more "artificially intelligent" we will face some of the brainless drivel (we already do) that the major media networks provide us. As a fireman, Guy Montag starts fires with books as the culprit - rather than putting them out. The idea is that books can make some people feel bad and as a result we should get rid of them - in other words books can be controversial and our country does not need disputes. The enforcer is a mechanical dog (which I found a little unrealistic and distracting) that injects a lethal poison into any opponents. Despite the silliness of the mechanical dog - the underlying theme is fantastic - open your mind and save the beauty of spontaneity and creativity of the human spirit.

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