

Summer 2009 Reading Assignment English III AP

Fahrenheit 451

By Ray Bradbury

“There must be something in books, things we can’t imagine, to make a woman stay in a burning house; there must be something there.”

Welcome to your summer reading assignment for English III AP. The requirements for the course are the reading of *Fahrenheit 451* and writing an essay. The essay is due the first full day of class. You also are to take a short comprehension test during the first week of classes. Because the **conflicts** in this novel are struggles of an individual against a whole society, sociology and systems of government are related themes. This book includes objectives in history, government, and economics. Although fictional, the repressive civilization depicted is quite believable. You can purchase the novel at the Sabre, your local bookstores, or online at Amazon.com.

The Novel at a Glance

Fahrenheit 451 is a science fiction novel, a disturbing story of a future civilization in which firemen burn books.

Setting: The future is an overcrowded, mechanized, pleasure-seeking, and repressive society.

Protagonist: Guy Montag, a fireman, who after ten years of burning books, suddenly recognizes their contribution to civilization.

Conflicts: The external conflict is between Montag, who rejects book burning, and the fire captain, who defends it. Montag’s internal conflict is between accepting the new world, one of violence and conformity, and wanting to return to the way things were in the past, gentler with room for different ideas.

Themes: Life is meaningless in a controlled society in which everyone is alike and imagination is repressed. Technology can isolate people and inhibit the sharing of thoughts, ideas, and emotions. Without knowledge, a civilization dies or kills itself.

Background: Ray Bradbury wrote a 25,000-word novella entitled “The Fireman” which he later expanded into this 50,000-word novel. He decided to give the novel a new title and, focusing on book burning, came up with the idea of using the temperature at which book paper burns. He called the physics and chemistry departments at several universities, but no one could pinpoint this temperature. Then, wondering why he had not thought of it first, he called the local fire station. The fire chief named the temperature, and Ray Bradbury had his title: *Fahrenheit 451*.

Essay Assignment

Choose one topic and write a 150 word minimum essay.

The paper will be graded on your development of thought with specific references to the novel. Include essential parts of an essay such as an introduction, thesis sentence, detail paragraphs supported by examples from the novel, and a conclusion. Grammar mechanics, complete sentences, usage, agreement, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation, will also be a consideration in grading.

1. Since the conflicts in *Fahrenheit 451* are believable struggles of an individual against a whole society, compare and contrast a system of government from history or now to *Fahrenheit 451*'s fictional, repressive civilization.
2. A major **theme** of *Fahrenheit 451* is that technology can isolate people and inhibit the sharing of **thoughts**, ideas, and emotions. Discuss the impact of today's technology on society and compare to the examples in the novel.
 - How have the inventions changed interpersonal relationships?
 - What have the inventions replaced? For better or for worse?
 - Why do Bradbury's characters need to learn to control technology?
How might we start if you believe we need to control technology?
3. For many readers, this novel brings to mind the book burning that took place in Nazi Germany. Discuss the events in the novel by relating the novel to real life. Could these events actually happen in today's world, or do you believe this fictional world could never exist? Choose one point of view to write a persuasive essay.