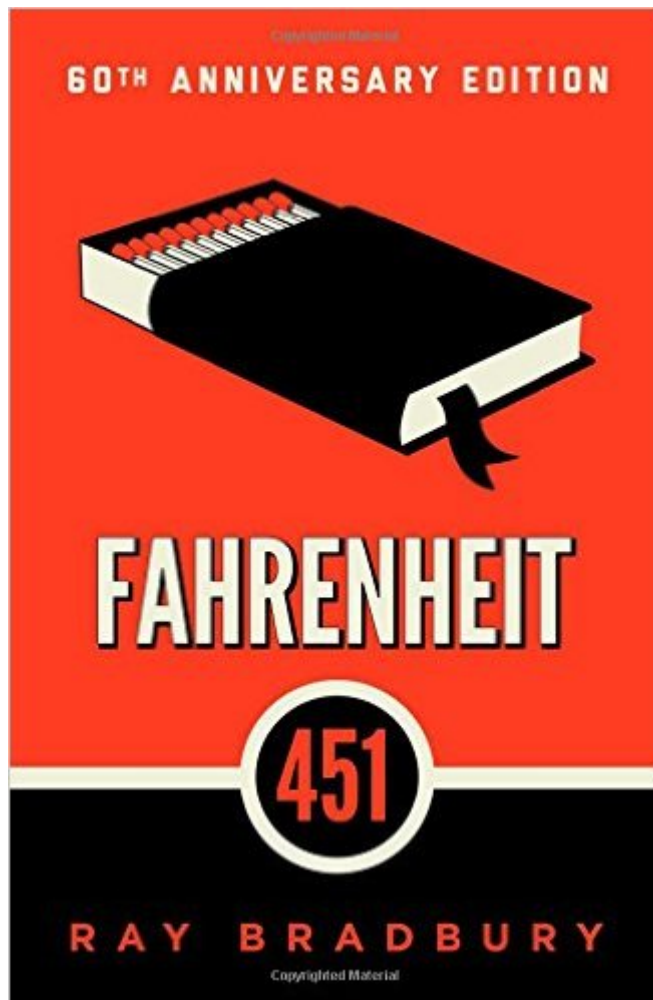


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# Fahrenheit 451



## 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

In Fahrenheit 451, Ray Bradbury's classic, frightening vision of the future, firemen don't put out fires--they start them in order to burn books. Bradbury's vividly painted society holds up the appearance of happiness as the highest goal--a place where trivial information is good, and knowledge and ideas are bad. Fire Captain Beatty explains it this way, "Give the people contests they win by remembering the words to more popular songs.... Don't give them slippery stuff like philosophy or sociology to tie things up with. That way lies melancholy." Guy Montag is a

book-burning fireman undergoing a crisis of faith. His wife spends all day with her television "family," imploring Montag to work harder so that they can afford a fourth TV wall. Their dull, empty life sharply contrasts with that of his next-door neighbor Clarisse, a young girl thrilled by the ideas in books, and more interested in what she can see in the world around her than in the mindless chatter of the tube. When Clarisse disappears mysteriously, Montag is moved to make some changes, and starts hiding books in his home. Eventually, his wife turns him in, and he must answer the call to burn his secret cache of books. After fleeing to avoid arrest, Montag winds up joining an outlaw band of scholars who keep the contents of books in their heads, waiting for the time society will once again need the wisdom of literature. Bradbury--the author of more than 500 short stories, novels, plays, and poems, including *The Martian Chronicles* and *The Illustrated Man*--is the winner of many awards, including the Grand Master Award from the Science Fiction Writers of America. Readers ages 13 to 93 will be swept up in the harrowing suspense of *Fahrenheit 451*, and no doubt will join the hordes of Bradbury fans worldwide. --Neil Roseman --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Starred Review. After years of working as a fireman--one who burns books and enjoys his work--Guy Montag meets a young girl who makes him question his profession and the values of the society in which he lives. Stephan Hoyer's narration is perfectly matched to the subject matter: his tone is low and ominous, and his cadence shifts with the prose to ratchet up tension and suspense. He produces spot-on voices, and his versions of the gruff Captain Beatty, the playful Clarisse, and the fearful professor Faber are especially impressive. A Ballantine paperback. (Aug.) (c) Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

In a future society, books are forbidden and "firemen" responsible for burning the remaining titles. That's the job of one Guy Montag, but he begins to question his role as he gets in contact with a teenager who reads secretly. And he becomes himself a criminal reader of smuggled books. The most surprising thing about *Fahrenheit 451* is that its premise could, in the hands of a lesser writer, easily turn a condescending little lesson about the importance of reading books. But like any work of art that would be missed if it was burned, *Fahrenheit 451* doesn't want to give you answers. The book wants you to ask questions. The main point for me is not that books are burned. That is only the most dramatic side of something bigger: that society allows them to be burned, and that no one is interested in reading in the first place. The only sources of distraction for the denizens of *Fahrenheit 451* are sports or soap operas in televisions the size of entire walls. The speed of

television does not allow you to stop and think, just swallow that entertainment loaf. From this insipid entertainment are born people who literally talk to the walls and a society unable to question. Montag's wife, Mildred is one example. She can't talk about anything other than the soaps or what threatens her financial security. She is a cattle-person, described as having an invisible cataract behind her pupils, afraid of anything different, incapable of thinking or feeling without directions from the TV or authorities. Montag discovers how they can't connect to one another because in the end they don't know their own history. And without that knowledge you can't even know who you are, or what you want. Today is 2015, and the society described in Fahrenheit 451 seems even more palpable than when the book was written in 1953. The internet shortens our attention span towards shorter and simpler texts and videos. More than ever we more intelligent - we have access to an ocean of information literally at our finger tips - but we are not wise. We don't know what to do with our information. And we have no memory. The social media timelines dictate the discussion of the day, what funny video is trending, what news we should be disgusted with, what meme will be the big joke for a day or two before it is once again forgotten. Fahrenheit 451 even reminds us of the "mass society judgments" that lead to self-censorship. I believe reading is fundamentally important for wisdom, more than any other art form. Reading is solitary work. It demands silence, and to let your ideas absorb the author's, contest them, accept or adapt. Fahrenheit 451 says that you can't make others think, but I believe it comes with a good recipe for wisdom: "Number one, like I said, is quality of information. Number two: time to digest. And number three: the right to conduct your actions based on what we learn from the two previous items."

Ray Bradbury began forming the core of his literary classic, Fahrenheit 451, in 1946, but it took seven years for him to collect all of his ideas and shape the book into its final form. In June of 1953 Bradbury, an energetic young man who was trying to establish himself as a writer while struggling to put food on the table for his young family, decided if he was going to get all of his ideas for the futuristic novel woven into a book, he had best create some alone-time and get it done. He entered the typing lab at UCLA in his hometown of Los Angeles and started feeding dimes into the college's pay typewriters (10 cents per half-hour) - and began typing in earnest. Nine days later he emerged with his final draft of Fahrenheit 451 in hand. In the 1950s, the time of the Red Scare, America was focused on atomic bombs and the spread of communism. Scurrilous politicians like Joe McCarthy and Richard Nixon were making careers off of stoking the people's sense of fear and pointing fingers at anyone who held political views that weren't totally mainstream. Dissent was more than just frowned upon, it was dangerous,

and Congress spent an inordinate amount of time on hearings, or witch hunts, which were focused on exposing communists in the government and in the arts. When the national hysteria finally began to wane, Ray Bradbury stepped forward with *Fahrenheit 451* and showed everyone what an unchecked totalitarian society could look like. It was an extremely timely piece of literature. Bradbury's world of the future is a place where cars, called "beetles," routinely go over a hundred miles an hour and often suffer horrific crashes. Television, which was a new medium in the 1950s, has been enhanced in Bradbury's future world to large walls (like our really big "big-screen televisions of today"). Families of the future buy their television walls, one by one, as they can afford them and gradually form a room within the house made of those large screens. The characters on television, called the "family," interact with the viewers, and those people without lives outside the home gradually become consumed with their television families "much like the lost souls today who routinely confuse Facebook with real life." *Fahrenheit 451* is focused on firemen of the future. In the world created by Ray Bradbury, houses and buildings have been fireproofed, eliminating the need for traditional firemen and the job has evolved into something quite different from its traditional role. Firemen of the future set fires instead of putting them out, and they have a special mission to help eradicate books because books cause people to think and worry. When a cache of books is discovered, firemen race to the scene and burn them. Guy Montag, a fireman, is the central character in *Fahrenheit 451*. When he isn't at the firehouse awaiting calls to burn books, he is at home with his wife Mildred. Mildred doesn't work, and she spends her days sitting within the three walls (they haven't been able to afford to buy the fourth yet) of her television area interacting with the family. Sometimes Mildred has friends over for cocktails and together they enjoy the programs that the family put on. Guy is unhappy with his life, but he doesn't realize it until he meets a strange young girl one night as he is walking home from work. The girl, Clarisse, asks Guy if he is happy and suddenly his sedentary world begins to heave. Before long Guy Montag is a man on the run, a man racing away from the clutches of a completely domineering social order. Ironically *Fahrenheit 451*, a book about the elimination of books, has made its way onto many banned book lists over the years. It is the story of the struggle for the survival of ideas and of the individual. Not every member of the herd is comfortable with the notion of strays or of the concept of free will and one way to maintain the status quo is to eliminate things that foster change things like books books like *Fahrenheit 451*. And it is change that keeps us vital and infuses our lives with meaning. Treasure your books!

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