

Analyzing and Responding to *Fahrenheit 451*

Note: In this collection of assignments, all page numbers refer to the 60th edition of Fahrenheit 451 by Simon & Schuster Inc.

1. A Post-WWII Dystopia: Technology and Government

Fahrenheit 451 is a dystopian novel that portrays technology as insidious and destructive factor in human life. It causes the decline of community and love, it fosters totalitarian control over people and it corrupts education, medicine and the human body. Explore one or more of these topics in series of annotated passages – that is, find proofs, copy them and analyze and comment on them. For more ideas about the nefarious influence of technology, watch this documentary: Most People Don't Even Know What's Coming: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5tn4P7IBgoQ>

2. Revolt and Revolution

Montag bravely revolts, but in vain. He and Granger's men must wait for civilization to destroy itself before they try to prevent people from starting everything all over again, like the mythical Phoenix, like Germany rebuilding itself after WWI and again after WWII and now learning that it is environmentally unsustainable. Granger wants to abandon civilization entirely. Now, journalist Chris Hedges has been calling people to rebel and revolt. Please read this article and attempt to articulate your own opinions on our civilization and the need for a revolution, and draw some connections or identify differences between the article and our novel. <https://www.truthdig.com/articles/the-rule-of-the-uber-rich-means-tyranny-or-revolution/>

3. The Upside-Down World

Why did the author present the concept of a profession, firefighting, that is doing the opposite of what it does in the real world? Similarly, the medical system in *Fahrenheit 451* is cold, diabolical and mechanical – the opposite of what it should be. Even the mechanical hound does the opposite of what real dogs do, and Montag's wife does the opposite of what a wife should do, and in Part Three the media does the opposite of what it should do. *And*, since the author does not say who is bombing the city, we can infer that the government is bombing its own people.

Is any of the above realistic? Have you studied American history, medical practice and statistics, and the media well enough to know if it is realistic? Please comment. You could refer to 9/11 conspiracy theory facts, medical malpractice stats, and so on.

Regarding book burning or censorship in general, currently, governments do not have firemen who actually burn books, but governments and their allied corporate media giants like Facebook do have other ways of censoring and 'burning' certain books/information. What are some topics and issues you think schools censor or avoid? Explore one of these topics with or without my help. You can explore any topic on or off the list below and provide in-text citations to your sources of information:

Government corruption
Monetary corruption
Medical fraud
Central banking
The cancer epidemic
Factory farming
The environmental impact of meat eating
The Sixth Extinction

Geoengineering
Communism & capitalism
The history of anarchism
Sugar and alcohol as toxic substances
WiFi and other sources of EM radiation
Fukushima
The war in Yemen

4. Naturology vs Technology

Clarisse represents a way of life that is more in harmony with Nature. From the beginning, the author deliberately associates her with Nature while Mildred and Montag are immersed in a technological world. Please comment on the duality between Nature and technology. *Fahrenheit 451* seems to condemn all of technology. Do you think this is necessary? Explain.

In Part One, Clarisse's face is red from exposure to the sun and Montag's face has a permanent grin from staring at burning houses. In Part Three, the hobos' faces are lit by the explosions and the camp fire. Read the following article and comment on how it relates to the author's overall message. <https://www.naturalnews.com/2019-01-30-sunscreen-is-killing-people-sunlight-deficiency-is-deadly.html>

5. Sensory Deprivation (SD) versus Direct Sensory Experience (DSE)

First Path

Fahrenheit 451 explores how technological progress deprives human beings of Direct Sensory Experience (DSE). Write about this topic and be sure to contrast Clarisse with Montag and Mildred, and mention the earbuds, the television screens, the book culture of the male academics in Part Three, and Montag's all-consuming obsession with the sensory experience of smoke and fire. Your exploration of this path could also involve discussion the motivations people might have for not wanting direct sensory experience of their world and the motivations rulers might have for depriving people of positive DSE of Nature and the human body, and for depriving people of negative DSE of what civilization is doing to Nature, society and human bodies.

Second Path

A common writing assignment is Descriptive Writing. In such assignments the student must attempt to describe a place or experience using words that describe direct sensory experience. In particular, students are expected to describe how the five senses – sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste – shaped their experience.

But are such assignments deceptive and hypocritical? If schools value the five senses, why are schools almost entirely text-based, indoors and increasingly digital and virtual instead of real? Why do they seem intent on reducing DSE?

Our education system, our media-rich environment and our indoor lifestyles deprive us of the full sensory experience provided by outdoor living without technology separating us from us it and destroying it.

In fact, science and knowledge generally are becoming further and further removed from direct sensory experience. Most of the 'knowledge' acquired by students consists of ideas and images of which they have no direct sensory experience and of which some, like algebra and physics, cannot be experienced by the senses.

Look at the following list and mark which OBJECT OF STUDY enriches (E) or deprives (D) you of sensory experience, and mark which OBJECT OF STUDY 1) you have direct experience of, 2) you don't have direct experience of but could acquire direct experience of, 3) others have direct experience of but you don't, but you trust their claims, and things or theories 4) you can never prove either exist or are true through DSE.

OBJECT OF STUDY	MARK 'E' OR 'D'	MARK '1', '2', '3', or '4'
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the map of the world 2. organs 3. World War I 4. viruses 5. bacteria 6. God and Heaven 7. Cells 8. gravity 9. Other planets 10. the spherical shape of the Earth 11. Green House gases 12. atoms 13. 1776 14. The theory of evolution 15. fiction 16. triangles 17. geometry 18. basic arithmetic 19. mathematics 		

Write a response to this path of thought. What does it mean, where does it lead, and propose alternative forms or alternative paths for learning, preferably ones that provide more DSE.

6. Censorship in the 21st Century:

Historical context:

Bradbury wrote during the McCarthy Era of censorship

General Introduction:

<http://www.globalresearch.ca/mainstream-media-fake-news-through-lying-by-omission/5582944>

Specific Examples:

Censorship of science in Canada:

1. <https://o.canada.com/news/federal-government-puts-polar-briefings-on-ice>
2. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/scientist-silencing-continues-for-federally-funded-research-1.2538273>
3. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/canadian-scientists-open-about-how-their-government-silenced-science-180961942/>
4. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/speaking-of-science/wp/2017/02/01/canadian-scientists-were-followed-threatened-and-censored-they-warn-trump-could-do-the-same/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.1ba39cdc5043

Lack of transparency in Canada:

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/opinion/government-transparency-1.4111341>

1. Censorship of infowars.com, naturalnews.com, and wsws.com.
2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= Zc6dXWD2cw> Trump and Clinton rallies
3. <https://www.rt.com/news/388456-un-says-trump-media-coverage-distracting-from-real-problems/>
4. <https://www.rt.com/op-edge/381966-aleppo-boy-versus-mosul-girl/>
5. <https://geopolitics.co/2016/02/06/canadian-media-ignoring-titanic-lawsuit-vs-bank-of-canada/>
6. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= eCF_X7vZHU
7. <http://www.naturalnews.com/2017-02-06-unimaginable-radiation-levels-detected-at-fukushima-mox-fuel-melts-through-reactor-floor.html>

7. Government Taxes and Waste in the 21st Century

(Relevant passage in the novel is found on page 58)

1. How are Canadians taxed? Investigate Canada's income taxes, property taxes, sales taxes, capital gains taxes and hidden taxes like fees associated with car licenses, car emissions tests, passports, city parking costs, dog licenses, fishing and hunting licenses, public transportation costs, airport charges and so. Then add up all these taxes to form an estimate of how much of people's incomes goes to their governments.
2. Research how much money is wasted or unaccounted for by the Pentagon in the United States in America.

8. The Decline of Community in the 21st Century

Discuss Montag's relationship with his professional community (his colleagues, Beaty included), with his wife, with his neighbors – Clarisse especially, and with the 'walking books.' Are any of these relationships reflective of their modern counterparts? Do people love their bosses and befriend colleagues? What is the divorce rate in Canada? Montag is also a destroyer, not a creator, so we might note that he has no children and wonder, is the real birthrate declining in Canada, and if so, what is it?

9. Government, Medication and Vaccination in the 21st Century

(Relevant concepts in the novel: procaine and ...)

- Research Novocaine, cocaine, and the opioid epidemic in North America.
- Research how much of the world's psychotropic drugs (mental health drug prescriptions) are used in the U.S. alone
- Research how Canada and California are considering forcing people to receive vaccines.

8. The Prohibition of Suicide

Montag's wife wanted to commit suicide, but the government's medical officers revived her *against her will* and does nothing to improve the quality of her life. If your life was one of unremitting suffering with no hope of improvement, would you want the right to end your life? Research if any countries have made suicide and euthanasia legal and offer your own opinion on the subject in a paragraph or two.

9. Education in the 21st Century

(Relevant passage in the novel is found on page 58)

1. What is "non-combustible data"? If it means data that does not inspire outrage and revolution, and combustible data does exist, what are some examples of the combustible data that schools omit from their curricula (studies)?
2. Canadian students study the War of 1812, WWI, WWII, and sometimes the Vietnam War of the 60s and 70s, but more recent wars are ignored. Please research some recent and current wars and summarize your findings.
3. Montag was, presumably, educated to do his job without criticism. Are Canadian students being educated to be different? Explain in an informal essay.

10. Progress, Nature and Beyond Books

- a) Reflect on Granger's statements on page 149-150 about creation, Nature and mortality.
- b) Every book burned is part of a tree burned and lost. In fact, every book printed is part of a tree that's been cut and lost. Bradbury is intensely aware of the importance of Nature and trees. Most scholars treat *Fahrenheit 451* as an unconditional defense of books, at least of 'literature.' However, Bradbury was certainly familiar with the fact that 1) books deprive us sensory experience and 2) humans existed quite peacefully without books (and bytes) because the human brain can remember or once could remember everything we need or needed to remember. Find evidence for claims 1 and/or 2 in the text. Focus on Clarissa and Faber for point 1, and on the 'walking books' he meets in the forest towards the end of the story.
- c) Granger says, "We all made the *right* kind of mistakes" (143). What did he mean? What are the right kind of mistakes in today's society? To help you formulate an answer, briefly research what Thoreau's *Civil Disobedience* is about, and research Edward Snowden or another famous known whistleblower.

- d) The story ends with a city, a symbol of civilization, being annihilated by bombs. This is meant to be a positive image and a sign of hope. How do you relate to such radical imagery? Would you be happier without cities? Explain.