

## Nature Imagery in the Upside-Down World of *Fahrenheit 451*

The nature images in *Fahrenheit 451* represent truth and enlightenment, especially for Montag but also for Clarisse. Montag lives in a world where the beauty of nature has been replaced by mechanical, robotic and man-made emptiness. When television screens occupy the walls of an entire room and small seashell radios broadcast in people's ears throughout the day, people rely on these inventions to live and to be entertained. In contrast, nature becomes extremely valuable for those who appreciate it and those who question the overuse of technology.

Two of the nature images in the story are employed negatively as they describe mechanical objects that are injurious to humans. For example, the mechanical hound is a robot that is compared to a dog. Dogs are known to be man's best friend; however, ironically, the Hound is the exact opposite. Originally, dogs serve as the rescuers for firemen, they were given the job of sniffing out the injured or the weak. In this dystopia, the Hound has been made into a watchdog of society. It has been programmed to avenge and punish citizens who break society's rules and represents government control and the manipulation of technology. The snake is another animal image. Snakes can be found in many places in the novel. When Mildred overdoses in the beginning, a stomach pump was used to save her. Montag likens the stomach pump to a "hungry" snake which feeds off of his wife. The snake implies the dangers of our over-reliance on technology; the more technology we adopt in our daily lives, the emptier we feel. Snake is also a symbol of censorship and control because of its association with the firemen. Montag describes the firehose as a "spitting python," and also recognizes the image of a snake sewed onto the sleeve of the firemen's uniform. Bradbury compares the lack of nature, or the overuse of technology to some of the most dangerous and feared animals as well as dogs, "man's best friend." The technologies with which the novel associates animals are always destructive and dangerous, which results in the changes in our perception of nature, that certain animals are evil.

Despite the comparison of technology to animals in nature, there remains positivity in the novel, mostly in when images of peaceful and pleasant animals are used to describe books, Clarisse and the world outside the city. In the opening paragraph, the pages of burning books are compared to birds trying to fly away. "The books leapt and danced like roasted birds, their wings ablaze with red and yellow feathers." The metaphor in this quotation suggests the books are alive and contain the living intelligence of its authors. The burning of books is equivalent to murdering a living-being, like a bird. In another comparison, when Millie attempts suicide, Montag compares the tool used to save her to a snake. The only other time animal imagery is positive in the entire novel is when Montag gets out of the river and encounters a deer. At first, he thinks it is a Hound but then realizes his mistake. Unlike other animals, the deer is a real animal, rather than a metaphor or a comparison to mechanical and 'evil' technologies. The deer is peaceful, beautiful, and an expression of nature. This image welcomes Montag into his new life. Clarisse is also associated with positive nature imagery. When readers first meet her, "[t]he motion of the wind and the leaves carry her forward." She is moving like a leaf in the wind, a part of nature. Moreover, since the word 'leaf' also means a page in a book, Clarisse is also linked to the bird image provided in the opening paragraph. Finally, when Montag meets with Clarisse, she shows him how to enjoy nature and mentions that "the rain feels good. I love to walk in it." Once again, this emphasizes her love for nature. Later when Montag is thinking about Clarisse, he describes her as "the girl who had known the weather and never been burned by the fireflies, the girl who had known what dandelions meant rubbed off on your chin." Clarisse understands the importance of working with nature rather than technology. Her relationships to

nature and technology are confirmed by the fact that she encouraged Montag to think about his career as a pyromaniac--or someone who loves burning living beings.

During the closing paragraphs, Montag remembers a passage from the Bible, "And on either side of the river was there a tree of life, which bare twelve manners of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month; the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." The tree of life is a symbol of immortality and is used as a source of fruit and healing and the leaves are a definition for pages in a book. As the bright life of "after death" is mentioned in the novel, it also can be interpreted as a future world without corruption or destruction.

The more enlightened Montag becomes, the more truths he finds. He moves away from the mechanical, robotic and man-made and towards nature. In fact, as the novel progresses, he physically moves from the city to the forest where he meets a group of people who have the same intentions and understandings as himself. The author probably treated Montag as a symbol for humanity, so Montag's return to nature represents mankind's future return to nature.