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Based on the book *Fahrenheit 451*

Adapted for the Theatre

by Ray Bradbury

Directed by Dado

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Fahrenheit 451

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“Anything you dream is fiction, anything you accomplish is science, the whole history of mankind is nothing but science fiction.” Ray Bradbury

Fahrenheit 451

By Ray Bradbury

(1953)

Time: the Future

Place: a City

The book is ablaze with the hope and despair of a writer wanting humankind to learn from its historical mistakes, and from the wisdom of its writers.

Imagine a world where everything is sped up, where bill boards are five times bigger than ours because the speed limit is so high, where everything you see from a car is a blur, where pedestrians don't exist. A future populated by non-readers and non-thinkers, people with no sense of their history, where a totalitarian government has banned the written word. This is more than just a story of dictatorial censorship, it is a story that also draws parallels between entertainment and addiction, between individual avoidance of thinking and governmental means of thought prevention.

Set in the twenty-fourth century, *Fahrenheit 451* tells the story of Guy Montag, a thirty-year-old-fireman whose job is to set fires, not put them out. He and his colleagues burn books, which are now considered contraband. At the outset Montag takes pleasure in his work, and thinks himself a happy man. Soon, however, he begins to question the value of his profession and, in turn, his life. He develops a friendship with his seventeen year-old neighbor, Clarisse McClellan. Her humanist philosophy and inquisitive nature prompt Montag to examine himself. He sees that he is unhappy with his wife, Mildred, who is unwilling to deal with reality and immerses herself in an addiction to both tranquilizers and the virtual world provided by her television and radio. He is unfulfilled by his work as a book burner, and begins to wonder why books inspire such passion that a woman is willing to burn herself along with her books rather than live without them. He is disgusted with himself and those around him for embracing the façade of life rather than examining what underlies it. Montag turns to Professor Faber for guidance. Faber is a scholar who tries to keep the contents of important books in his head. Montag's internal struggle and his disdain for his ignorant society are brought to a crisis when an alarm brings the firemen to his own home. Montag awaits the birth of a new society where truth and knowledge are again respected.

Fahrenheit 451, the temperature at which paper catches fire.

Fahrenheit 451 is a social criticism that warns against the danger of suppressing thought through censorship. *Fahrenheit 451* uses the conventions of science fiction to convey the message that oppressive government, left unchecked, does irreparable damage to society by curtailing the creativity and freedom of its people. The "dystopia" motif, popular in science fiction - that of a technocratic and totalitarian society that demands order at the expense of individual rights - is central to the novel.

Developed in the years immediately following World War II, *Fahrenheit 451* condemns not only the anti-intellectualism of Nazi Germany, but more immediately America in the early 1950's - the heyday of McCarthyism. It is no coincidence that such influential social criticisms as Orwell's *Animal Farm* and *1984* and Skinner's *Walden Two* were published in the same time period. These works reveal a very real societal fear that the US might evolve into an oppressive, authoritarian society.

On a more personal level, Bradbury used *Fahrenheit 451* as a means of protesting what he believed to be the invasiveness of editors who, through their strict control of the books they printed, impaired the originality and creativity of writers. Ironically, *Fahrenheit 451*, itself a vehicle of protest against censorship, has often been edited for foul language.

Fahrenheit 451 has sold millions of copies and established itself as a literary classic. The Library of Congress recently designated this best-known book of Bradbury's as one of the top 100 works of American literature. Forty-nine years after it first appeared on bookshelves, Ray Bradbury's cautionary novel remains recommended reading in classrooms across the country.

Similarities with our society

The society Bradbury describes in *Fahrenheit 451* is, in many ways, like the one we are living in right now: a technologically advanced and violent society, a busy and fast-paced world. Clarisse notices how fast people drive:

⇒ "...don't know what grass is, or flowers because they never see them slowly. If you showed a driver a green blur, Oh yes! He'd say, that 's grass! A pink blur! That's a rose garden! White blurs are houses. Brown blurs are cows. My uncle drove slowly on a highway once. He drove forty miles an hour and they jailed him for two days." (p. 9) *

In *Fahrenheit 451* young people are violent. Clarisse tells Montag she is:

⇒ "...afraid of children my own age. They kill each other...Six of my friends have been shot in the last year alone. Ten of them died in car wrecks. I'm afraid of them and they don't like me because I'm afraid." (p.30)*

One needs only think of the Columbine High School massacre to note the presence of violence in our society.

Like *Fahrenheit 451*'s firemen, Hitler was burning books in Germany. We should ask ourselves: how far are we from this fictional world? *Fahrenheit 451* is disturbing precisely because it is plausible.

• refers to *Fahrenheit 451*, a Del Rey Book published by Ballantine Books, First Trade Edition: August 1996

FACT: FACT: FACT:

“The government has a history of controlling the reading habits of Americans. The FBI’s ‘Library Awareness Program’ sought to ‘recruit librarians as counter intelligence *assets* to monitor suspicious library users and report their reading habits to the FBI.’ When the American Library Association (ALA) learned of this, its Intellectual Freedom Committee issued an advisory statement warning that libraries are not ‘extensions of the long arm of the law or of the gaze of Big Brother...’ Another ALA memo chastised the FBI for its efforts to ‘convert library circulation records into ‘suspect lists’...’ The program was eventually ended, or so says the FBI.”

From www. Alchemind.org

Foerstel, H. *Library Surveillance: The FBI’s Library Awareness Program* (1991)

Also look at the USA Patriot Act established after the September 11th terrorist attack.

American Civil Liberties Union (www.aclu.org)

Literary motifs

Symbolism

Bradbury’s use of symbolism throughout renders the book moving and powerful and reinforces his ideas of anti-censorship. Some symbolism to look for:

- Books are burned physically and “ideas are burned from the mind.” Bradbury warns us about what happens when we stop expressing our ideas, and we permit people to take away our books.
- Part one of the book entitled *The Earth and The Salamander*: a salamander is known to endure fire without getting burned. A salamander is therefore symbolic of Montag, because he works with fire and endures it. Montag believes he can escape the fire and survive, much like a salamander.
- The symbol of a Phoenix is used throughout the novel. A Phoenix is a multicolored bird from Arabian myth. At the end of its 500-year existence, it perches on its nest of spices and sings until sunlight ignites its body. After the body is consumed, a worm emerges and develops into the next Phoenix. This symbolizes both the rebirth after destruction by fire and the cyclical nature of things. Firemen wear the Phoenix on their uniforms and Beatty drives a Phoenix car. Montag, after realizing that fire has destroyed him, wishes to be “reborn.”

Granger, one of *Fahrenheit 451*’s characters, said: “ There was a silly damn bird called Phoenix back before Christ, every few hundred years he built a pyre and burnt himself up. He must have been first cousin to Man.” (p.163)

Challenge Question

- Can you find other examples of symbolism in the book? How did the play utilize symbolism through lighting, colors, space...?

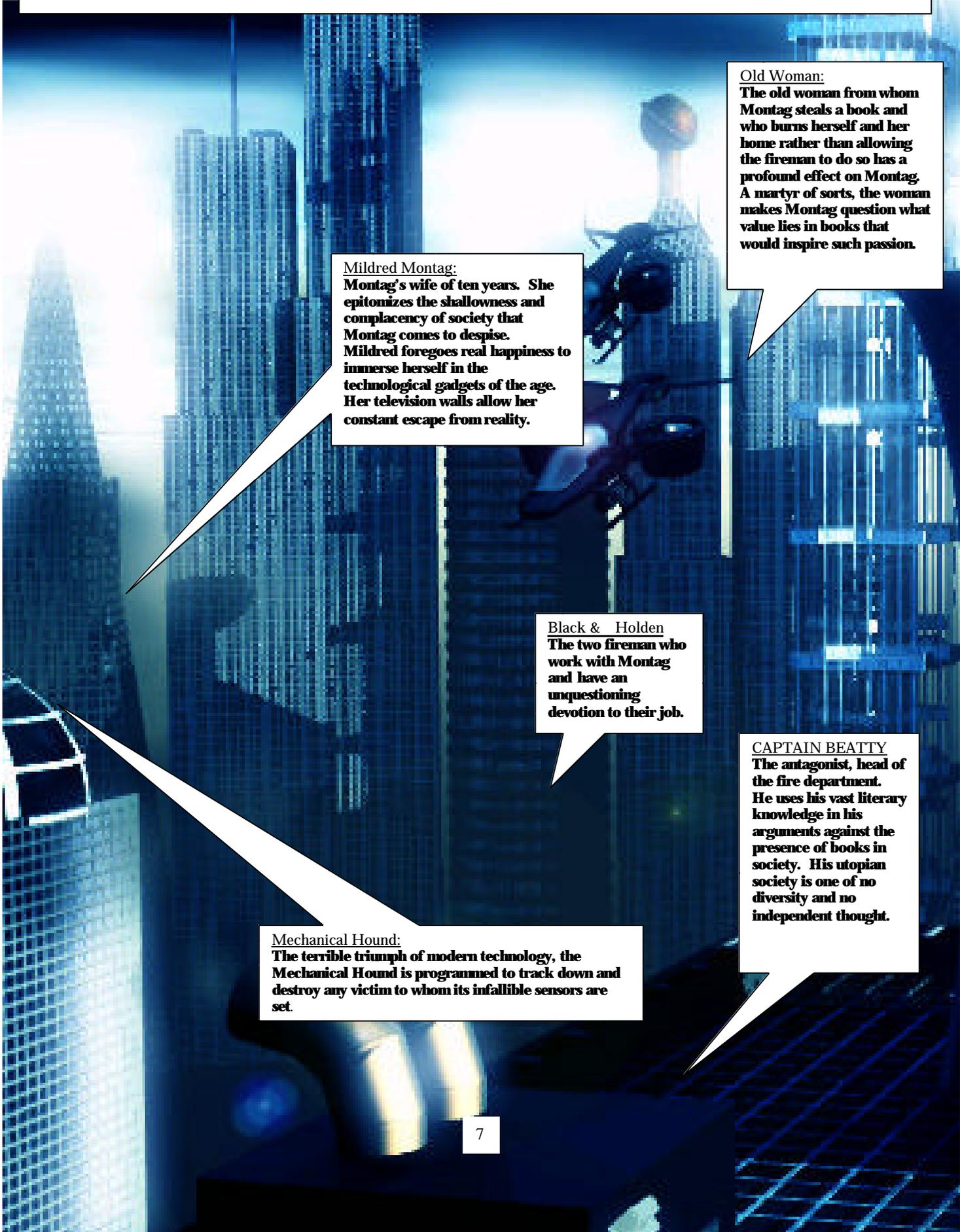
Dualism

Book -burner / book -reader dualism: Montag burns books during his workday. At home, however, he secretly spends his time reading novels. Beatty and Faber represent this opposition: Montag receives totally opposing lectures from them on the innate value of books and what ought to be done with them.

The fire has in itself two conflicting properties: destruction and preservation. The fire is used to burn houses and books, to destroy possessions. Fire also provides heat to cook meals, warm people and provide light. In the book, when Montag meets the rest of the escapees in the secret camp, they are all sitting around a campfire sharing ideas and reading. This grants Montag and the reader an understanding that one thing can have both good and bad qualities and that beneficial powers can turn destructive if abused.

Challenge Question

- Discuss with your class other forms of dualism in the story, in our society, in ourselves...



Old Woman:
The old woman from whom Montag steals a book and who burns herself and her home rather than allowing the fireman to do so has a profound effect on Montag. A martyr of sorts, the woman makes Montag question what value lies in books that would inspire such passion.

Mildred Montag:
Montag's wife of ten years. She epitomizes the shallowness and complacency of society that Montag comes to despise. Mildred foregoes real happiness to immerse herself in the technological gadgets of the age. Her television walls allow her constant escape from reality.

Black & Holden
The two fireman who work with Montag and have an unquestioning devotion to their job.

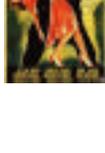
CAPTAIN BEATTY
The antagonist, head of the fire department. He uses his vast literary knowledge in his arguments against the presence of books in society. His utopian society is one of no diversity and no independent thought.

Mechanical Hound:
The terrible triumph of modern technology, the Mechanical Hound is programmed to track down and destroy any victim to whom its infallible sensors are set.

“Science fiction is really sociological studies of the future, things that the writer believes are going to happen by putting two and two together.” Ray Bradbury

About Science Fiction

What is science fiction?



Science fiction is a form that deals principally with the impact of actual or imagined science upon society or individuals. If science concerns itself with discovery, then science fiction concerns itself with the consequences of discovery. It is a testament to the visionary nature of the form that science fiction writers predicted the advent of atomic weapons and sentient machines. Its enduring value though is in its capacity to ask probing questions of each new scientific advance, to conduct a dialogue with progress that decodes its real meaning and reveals it to us.

Isaac Asimov asserts, “modern science fiction is the only form of literature that consistently considers the nature of the changes that face us, the possible consequences, and the possible solutions.” [Science fiction is] “...that branch of literature which is concerned with the impact of scientific advance upon human beings.” (1952)

Science fiction consists of a careful and informed extrapolation of scientific facts and principles. It has to be plausibly based on science. Science fiction writers have included predictions of future societies on Earth, analyses of the consequences of interstellar travel and imaginative explorations of other forms of intelligent life and their societies in other worlds.

The development of science fiction

Science fiction was made possible by the rise of modern science itself, notably the revolutions in astronomy and physics. Early science fiction writers were **Voltaire's** *Micromegas* (1752) and his imaginary voyages to the moon or other planets and space travel, **Jonathan Swift's** *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) and his alien cultures, and science fiction elements in the nineteenth century stories of **Edgar Allan Poe**, **Nathaniel Hawthorne** and **Fitz-James O'Brien**. Science fiction proper began, toward the end of the nineteenth century with the scientific romances of **Jules Verne** whose science consisted primarily of invention, as well as the science-oriented novels of social criticism by **H.G. Wells**.

The development of science fiction as an official literary genre dates from 1926 when **Hugo Gernsback** founded the *Amazing Stories* magazine, which was devoted exclusively to science fiction stories. In 1937, with the advent of a demanding editor, **John Campbell, Jr.** of *Astounding Science Fiction* and with the publications of stories and novels by such writers as **Isaac Asimov**, **Arthur Clarke** and **Robert Heilein**, science fiction emerged as a mode of serious fiction.

A great boom in the popularity of science fiction followed World War II. The fame of science fiction was international, from the Soviet Union to other eastern European nations, and was frequently used as a vehicle for political commentary that could not be safely published in other forms. It is now common to study science fiction in colleges and universities as literature.

Major science fiction books of the 50s:



- 1950 ————— ***I, Robot*** by Isaac Asimov (nine robot stories establish Asimov’s “3 laws of robotics”)
- The Martian Chronicles*** by Ray Bradbury (stories about the colonization of Mars)
- 1951 ————— ***The Illustrated Man*** by Ray Bradbury (stories of tattoos coming alive when their host body is asleep)
- 1952 ————— ***The Currents of Space*** by Isaac Asimov (amnesiac in future galactic empire meets girls, searches for lost identity...)
- 1954 ————— ***Lord of the Flies*** by William Golding (a cautionary tale about civilization run amok)
- 1955 ————— ***Solar Lottery*** by Philip K. Dick (heroic yet ordinary humans battle Big Business, dictatorship, terrorists and criminals)

Burning Bright

An excerpt from a foreword to the fortieth Anniversary Edition
of *Fahrenheit 451*

by Ray Bradbury

February 14, 1993

“...a prediction that my fire Chief, Beatty, made in 1953, halfway through my book. It had to do with books being burned without matches or fire. Because you don’t have to burn books, do you, if the world starts to fill up with nonreaders, non-learners, non-knowers? If the world wide-screen-basketballs and footballs itself to drown in MTV, no Beattys are needed to ignite the kerosene or hunt the reader. If the primary grades suffer meltdown and vanish through the cracks and ventilators of the schoolroom, who, after a while, will know or care?

All is not lost, of course. There is still time if we judge teachers, students, and parents, hold them accountable on the same scale, if we truly test teachers, students, and parents, if we make everyone responsible for quality, if we insure that by the end of its sixth year every child in every country can live in libraries to learn almost by osmosis, then our drug, street-gang, rape, and murder scores will suffer themselves near zero. But the Fire Chief, in mid-novel, says it all, predicting the one-minute TV commercial with three images per second and no respite from the bombardment. Listen to him, know what he says, then go sit with your child, open a book, and turn the page.”



Biography

Ray Bradbury was born in Waukegan, Illinois, on August 22, 1920.

By the time he was eleven, he had already begun writing his own stories on butcher paper. His family moved fairly frequently, and he graduated from a Los Angeles high school in 1938. In high school he was active in drama/poetry club and planned to become an actor. He had no further formal education, but he studied on his own at the library and continued to write. According to Bradbury, he graduated from the library at the age of twenty-eight. For several years, he earned money by selling newspapers on street corners.

His first published story was "Hollerbochen's Dilemma", which appeared in 1938 in *Imagination!*, a magazine for amateur writers. In 1942 he was published in *Weird Tales*, the legendary pulp science fiction magazine that fostered such luminaries of the genre as H. P. Lovecraft. Bradbury honed his science fiction sensibility writing for popular television shows, including *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* and *The Twilight Zone*. He also ventured into screenplay writing (he wrote the screenplay for John Huston's 1953 film *Moby Dick*). His book *The Martian Chronicles*, published in 1950, established his reputation as a leading American writer of science fiction.

Bradbury's great adventures would take place behind a typewriter, in the realm of imagination:

In the spring of 1950, while living with his family in a humble home in Venice, California, Bradbury began writing what was to become *Fahrenheit 451* on pay-by-the-hour typewriters in the University of California at Los Angeles library basement. He finished the first draft, a shorter version called *The Fireman*, in just nine days. Following in the futuristic tradition of George Orwell's *1984*, *Fahrenheit 451* was published in 1953 and became Bradbury's most popular and widely read work of fiction. He produced a stage version of the novel at the Studio Theatre Playhouse in Los Angeles. The seminal French New Wave director François Truffaut also made a critically acclaimed film adaptation in 1966.

Bradbury has received many awards and honors for his writing.

Two years ago, he was awarded the National Book Foundation's 2000 Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters. Most notably, Apollo astronauts named the Dandelion Crater on the moon after his novel *Dandelion Wine*. In addition to his novels, screenplays, and scripts for television, Bradbury has written two musicals, co-written two "space-age cantatas", collaborated on an Academy Award-nominated animation short called *Icarus Montgolfier Wright*, and started his own television series, *The Ray Bradbury Theatre*. Bradbury has a stunning career that includes more than 500 publications. Bradbury, who still lives in California, continues to write and is acknowledged as one of the masters of the science fiction genre. In 1980 he won the Gandalf Award for Lifetime Contribution to Fantasy.

In his words:
How did Ray Bradbury become a writer?

During the Labor Day week of 1932 a favorite uncle of mine died; his funeral was held on the Labor Day Saturday. If he hadn't died that week, my life might not have changed because, returning from his funeral at noon on that Saturday, I saw carnival tent down by Lake Michigan. I knew that down there, by the lake, in his special tent, was a magician named **Mr. Electrico**.

Mr. Electrico was a fantastic creator of marvels. He sat in his electric chair every night and was electrocuted in front of all the people, young and old, of Waukegan, Illinois. When the electricity surged through his body he raised a sword and knighted all the kids sitting in the front row below his platform. I had been to see Mr. Electrico the night before. When he reached me, he pointed his sword at my head and touched my brow. The electricity rushed down the sword, inside my skull, made my hair stand up and sparks fly out of my ears. He then shouted at me, "Live forever!"

I thought that was a wonderful idea, but how did you do it?

The next day, being driven home by my father, fresh from the funeral, I looked down at those carnival tents and thought to myself, "The answer is there. He said 'Live forever,' and I must go find out how to do that." I told my father to stop the car. He didn't want to, but I insisted. He stopped the car and let me out, furious with me for not returning home to partake in the wake being held for my uncle. With the car gone, and my father in a rage, I ran down the hill. What was I doing? I was running away from death, running toward life.

When I reached the carnival grounds, by God, sitting there, almost as if he were waiting for me, was Mr. Electrico. I grew, suddenly, very shy. I couldn't possibly ask, How do you live forever? But luckily I had a magic trick in my pocket. I pulled it out, held it toward Mr. Electrico and asked him if he'd show me how to do the trick. He showed me how and then looked into my face and said, "Would you like to see some of those peculiar people in that tent over there?"

I said, "Yes."

He took me over to the sideshow tent and hit it with his cane and shouted, "Clean up your language!" at whoever was inside. Then, he pulled up the tent flap and took me in to meet the Illustrated Man, the Fat Lady, the Skeleton Man, the acrobats, and all the strange people in the sideshows.

He then walked me down by the shore and we sat on a sand dune. He talked about his small philosophies and let me talk about my large ones. At a certain point he finally leaned forward and said, "You know, we've met before."

I replied, "No, sir, I've never met you before."

He said, "Yes, you were my best friend in the great war in France in 1918 and you were wounded and died in my arms at the battle of the Ardennes Forrest. But now, here today, I see his soul shining out of your eyes. Here you are, with a new face, a new name, but the soul shining from your face is the soul of my dear dead friend. Welcome back to the world."

Why did he say that? I don't know. Was there something in my eagerness, my passion for life, my being ready for some sort of new activity? I don't know the answer to that. All I know is that he said, "Live forever" and gave me a future and in doing so, gave me a past many years before, when his friend died in France.

Leaving the carnival grounds that day I stood by the carousel and watched the horses go round and round to the music of "Beautiful Ohio." Standing there, the tears poured down my face, for I felt that something strange and wonderful had happened to me because of my encounter with Mr. Electrico.

I went home and the next day traveled to Arizona with my folks. When we arrived there a few days later I began to write, full time. I have written every single day of my life since that day sixty-nine years ago.

I have long since lost track of Mr. Electrico, but I wish that he existed somewhere in the world so that I could run to him, embrace him, and thank him for changing my life and helping me become a writer.

Ray Bradbury, December 2001

His influence as a youngster:

In high school, two of Bradbury's teachers recognized a greater talent in him. They encouraged his development as a writer: Snow Longley Housh taught him about poetry and Jeannette Johnson taught him to write short stories. Over sixty years later, Bradbury's work bears indelible impressions left by these two women. Bradbury always looked to established writers for guidance: his other mentors included Henry Kuttner, Leigh Brackett, Robert Heilein and Henry Hasse.

Bradbury's philosophy:

To fall in love with one idea after another and to immerse oneself in these loves.

To follow one's heart wherever it leads.

Not to ever let anyone talk someone out of one's dreams.

"Stuff your eyes with wonder. Live as if you'd drop dead in ten seconds. See the world. It's more fantastic than any dream made up or paid for in factories." Bradbury

His view on technology:

Bradbury intuitively grasped how annoyingly demanding and oddly isolating technology can be.

According to Bradbury, **Libraries** - where he spent most of his nights when he was a student - have an immediacy, a sensory experience that can't be matched using a home computer to surf the Internet.

Today, author Ray Bradbury is on fire!

At eighty-two, Bradbury is the most sought-after writer in Hollywood. Last April, *Fahrenheit 451* reached No.1 on the Los Angeles Times bestsellers list as part of the "One Book, One City L.A." initiative created by Mayor Jim Hahn. "We want to make our city the best it can be" he said. "By reading great literary works, like *Fahrenheit 451*, we can foster dialogue among our city's diverse groups, and we can create a community that's unmatched by any in this great nation." (From www.writenews.com)

Last year Hollywood celebrated one of the author's major publishing anniversaries: the first printed version of *Fahrenheit 451* debuted in *Galaxy Science Fiction* magazine.

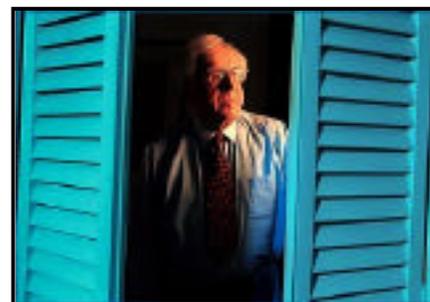
Personal life:

"I envy your youngness today. I envy your youngness. If I had to go back, and do everything over, I'd do it again. With everything that's been wrong in my life; with everything that's been good; with all the mistakes, all the problems. When I got married, all my wife's friends said, 'Don't marry him. He's going nowhere.' But I said to her, 'I'm going to the moon, and I'm going to Mars. Do you want to come along?' And she said, 'Yes' She said yes. She took a vow of poverty, and married me. On the day of our wedding, we had eight dollars in the bank."

Bradbury met his future wife Marguerite McClure in Los Angeles in 1946 and got married the year after. They have four daughters.

Challenge Questionp

- Describe a way in which your personal philosophy is reflected in your life.



Foundation for F451

a. The 50's Political Environment – McCarthyism

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b. The 50's General Timeline

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c. Censorship

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“I grew up with a plentiful supply of books to be read. Even after I’d finished a particular book, I’d find my imagination racing, wondering what the characters might do next.”
Ray Bradbury

The 1950's General Political Environment - McCarthyism

The foundation when *Fahrenheit 451* was written

- 1950 _____ t The US was concerned with the threat of Communism
t War in Korea: United Nations troops push back Chinese troops
- 1954 _____ t Nikita Krushnev head of Soviet Union, de-Stalinization, McCarthyism
- 1956 _____ t South Vietnam refuses the referendum on unification with North Vietnam and a guerilla war begins
t Hungarian revolution against Communism is squashed by Soviet troops

Communism and national security: the red menace

Due to the U.S. conflict with the Soviet Union, anti-Communism moved to the ideological center of American politics. By the beginning of 1946 most of the nation's policymakers had come to view the Soviet Union as a hostile power committed to a program of worldwide expansion that only the United States was strong enough to resist.

The anti-communist agenda:

What transformed the communist threat into a national obsession was the involvement of the federal government. During the early years of the cold war, the actions of the federal government helped to forge and legitimize the anti-communist consensus that enabled most Americans to condone or participate in the serious violations of civil liberties that characterized the McCarthy era.

McCarthyism

Joseph McCarthy was a republican senator of Wisconsin known for attracting headlines with his charges of communist infiltration in American organizations. McCarthy's accusations were usually baseless and ruined the careers of many distinguished citizens. He became front-page news in 1950, when he publicly charged that more than two hundred secret communists had infiltrated the State Department. While the U.S. conducted a militant anti-communist campaign against advances in Eastern Europe and China, Senator McCarthy obsessively pursued an investigation of communist subversion in all walks of life here at home.

The Army-McCarthy hearings in 1954 were held to investigate charges by Senator McCarthy that Secretary of the Army Stevens and Army counsel Adams were not cooperating with the Senate Subcommittee's attempts to uncover communists in the military. With a television audience of twenty million Americans, public reaction to Senator McCarthy's activities became more negative. Over the span of thirty-six days, there were thirty-two witnesses, seventy-one half-day sessions, 187 hours of TV air time, 100,000 live observers, and two million words of testimony.

McCarthy died on May 2, 1957, of cirrhosis of the liver at the age of forty-eight.

Consider, however, that McCarthyism's main impact may well have been in what was prevented: the social reforms that were never adopted, the diplomatic initiatives that were not pursued, the workers who never unionized, the books that were never written, and the movies that were never filmed.

On the pretext of protecting the nation from communist infiltration, federal agents attacked individual rights and extended state power into movie studios, universities, labor unions, and many other ostensibly independent non-governmental institutions.

Black Listing:

Careers were destroyed by knowing the wrong person

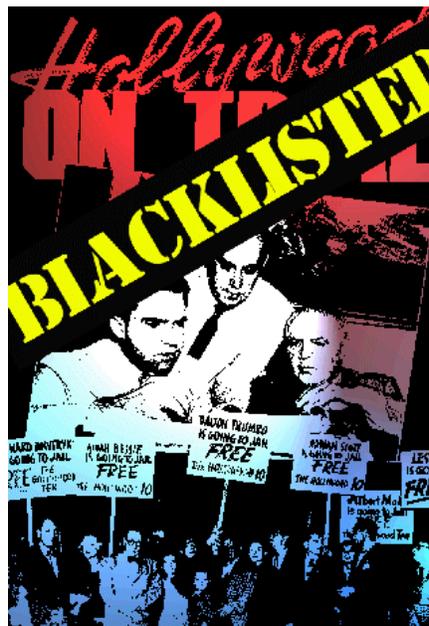
McCarthyism was an effective form of political repression. The punishments were primarily economic: in the McCarthy era roughly ten thousand people lost their jobs.

Indeed, most of the time the first stage of identifying the alleged communists was handled by an official agency like an investigating committee or the FBI. The investigators often greased the wheels by warning their witnesses' employers or releasing lists of prospective witnesses to the local press.

In the entertainment industry, the anti-communist firings and subsequent blacklisting of men and women in show business are well known. The movies had been a target of the anti-communist network since the late 1930s and in 1947, the Hollywood Ten hearings precipitated the blacklist.

By 1951, the blacklist was in full operation. There was, of course, no official list and the studios routinely denied that blacklisting occurred. Still, writers stopped getting calls for work; actors were told they were "too good for the part." The blacklist spread to the broadcast industry as well. Here, the process became public in June 1950 with the publication of *Red Channels*, a 213-page compilation of the alleged communist affiliations of 151 actors, writers, musicians, and other radio and television entertainers.

When the blacklist lifted in the 1960s, its former victims were never able to fully resuscitate their careers. Teachers, industrial workers, and lawyers were also affected because of their affiliation with left-wing unions or their refusal to cooperate with anti-communist investigators.



1950's Timeline

1950

President Harry Truman approves production of the hydrogen bomb.



Ted Williams becomes the highest paid baseball player at \$125,000 a year (today Alex Rodrigues makes twenty-two million dollars a year).



1951

Television begins to be broadcast nationally, coast to coast.



Jackson Pollock and other American painters continued to create a new "Abstract Expressionism" style.



The first nuclear test occurs at the Nevada Test Site.

Julius and Ethel Rosenberg are convicted and sentenced to death for passing information on atomic weapons to the USSR.



1952

Suburbia is born in the form of small suburban communities like Levittown, PA. Many more families could now afford to own homes.



Fashion, along with other areas of American culture, continued to be conservative. Highlights include sweater vests, gray flannel suits, and poodle skirts.

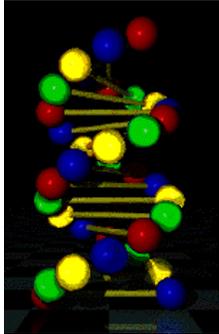


A second US nuclear weapons laboratory is established in Livermore, CA.

First British atomic bomb, "Hurricane" was tested at Monte Bello Islands, Australia, with a yield of twenty-five kilotons.

1953

Francis Crick and James Watson discover the double helix of the DNA.



1954

The U.S. Supreme Court wrote in "Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas" that racial segregation in schools was illegal.



U.S. Senator Joseph McCarthy begins a televised anti-communist witch-hunt.



The first deliverable hydrogen bomb is tested at Bikini Atoll.

The USA threatens to use the nuclear weapons to stop Soviet aggression on Europe.

The Regency TR-1 was the world's first commercially marketed transistor radio.



1955

Disneyland opens in Los Angeles.

The Beat Generation of writers is launched by the publication of Allen Ginsberg's poem "Howl" which began, "I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness, starving hysterically naked..."



Rosa Parks refuses to give up her seat on a public bus in Montgomery, Alabama.



First true fusion device test by the Soviet Union, it had a yield of one-point six megatons. Andrei Skharov led the development.

1956

Elvis Presley took the music world by storm with five #1 songs on the Billboard Music Chart.



Robert Noyce and Jack Kilby invent the microchip.

The first enclosed mall called Southdale opened in Edina, Minnesota (near Minneapolis).

Challenge Question

- Discuss with your class the relationship between artistic expression and social climate.
- Discuss with your class how the 1950's influenced Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*.

1957

First British H-bomb exploded at Christmas Island.

First underground nuclear test "Rainier" occurred at the Nevada Test Site.

Britain's first truly successful thermonuclear bomb test.

Fire destroyed the core of a reactor at Britain's Windscale nuclear complex, sending clouds of radioactivity into the atmosphere.

Britain and France each become a nuclear power.

Television viewing rapidly expands with the introduction of Cable television.

Jack Kerouac publishes the novel that defines the Beat Generation, *On the Road*.



Extensive work begins on the Federal Highway system after it was approved a year earlier. Now there are over 45,000 miles of interstate highways, and you can drive 2,906 miles from New York City to San Francisco on Interstate eighty.



The Soviet Union Launches the Sputnik, the first artificial satellite.

1958

The first US Polaris capable nuclear missile submarine enters into service.

Drive-in movies were the place to hangout if you were a teenager.



On December 10, 1958 the first domestic jet-airline passenger service is begun by National Airlines between New York and Miami.



European democracies (Italy, Germany, Belgium, Holland, France) found European Union.

1959

Alaska and Hawaii become the forty-ninth and fiftieth states.

U.S. Constitution: First Amendment – Religion and Expression
20

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

Censorship

As long as humans have sought to communicate, others have sought to prevent them. Every day some government or other group tries to restrict or control what can be said, written, sung, or broadcast. Almost every idea ever thought has proved objectionable to someone, and almost everyone has sometimes felt the world would be a better place if only “so and so” would go away.

Censorship in *Fahrenheit 451*

Censorship is a key theme in *Fahrenheit 451*. In the world of *Fahrenheit 451*, books are burned because they trigger thought and discontent, two things which are unwelcome in this "happiness oriented" society. What's unexpected about censorship in *Fahrenheit 451* is that it seems to have originated with the people, not the government's desire to control. People were unhappy and discontented, so the government acted to remove the sources of their unhappiness and to enhance their lives with activities which would prevent them from thinking and, thus, being unhappy.

“Remember, the firemen are rarely necessary. The public itself stopped reading of its own accord...” Ray Bradbury on *Fahrenheit 451*

Censorship in many forms continues to be a part of our lives, though not so blatant or extensive as in *Fahrenheit 451*. Schools across the country are subjected regularly to efforts of censorship from what is being read and taught. Media, too, is often censored (often by the same groups which attempt to censor schools).

FACT: FACT: FACT:

Ballantine Books originally published the novel in 1953, but in 1967 brought out a special edition to be sold to high schools. Without informing Bradbury or putting a note in the edition, the publisher modified seventy-five passages in the novel in order to eliminate words like “hell,” “damn” and “abortion.” The expurgated edition was sold for thirteen years before a friend of Bradbury’s alerted him to the problem. Bradbury demanded that Ballantine withdraw the version and replace it with the original. Ballantine agreed. The publicity generated by the expurgated version of *Fahrenheit 451* caused the American Library Association’s Intellectual Freedom Committee to investigate other school books and use its considerable economic clout to warn publishers about expurgations and demand that any excised versions be clearly identified. (from www.trib.com)

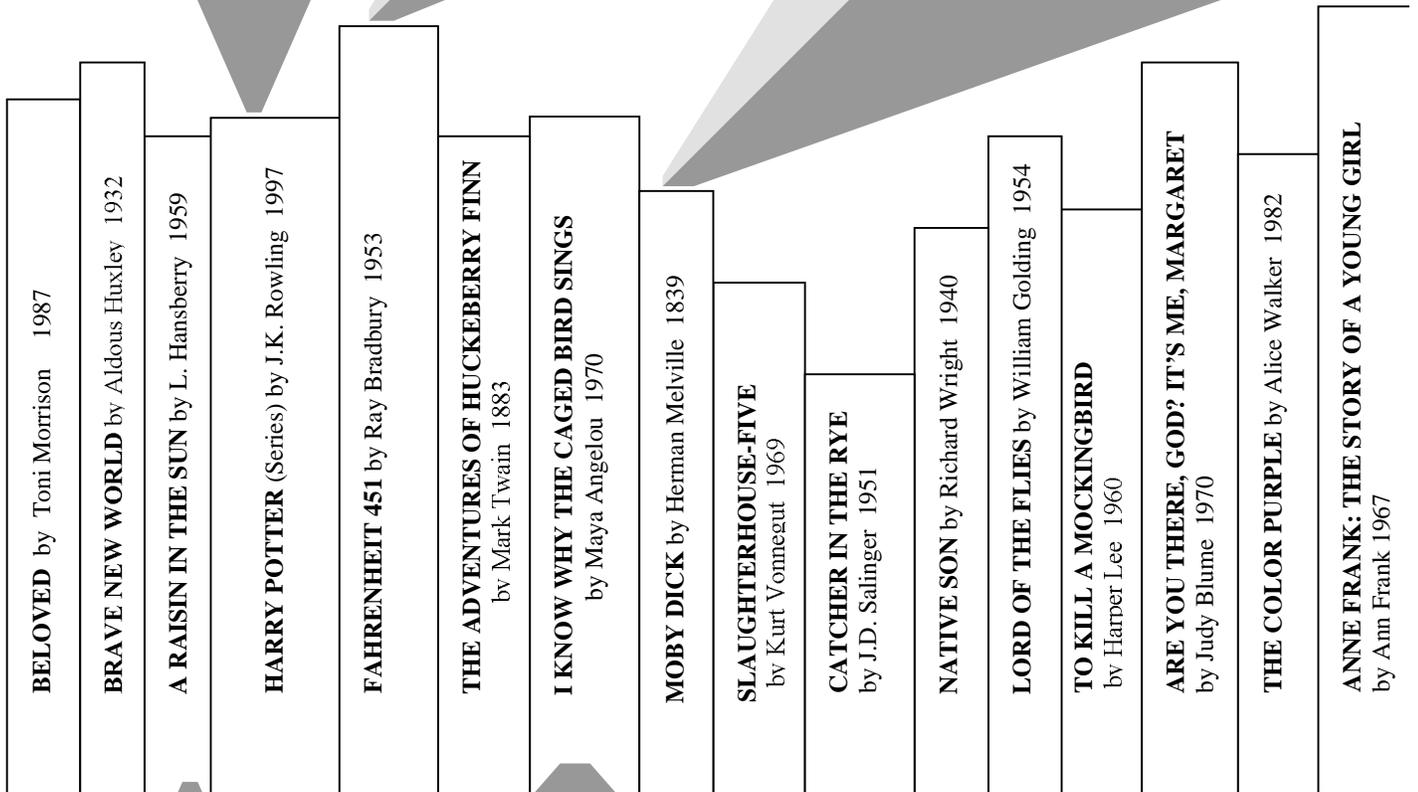
Banned and Challenged Books

“A **challenge** is an attempt to remove or restrict materials, based upon the objections of a person or group. A **banning** is the removal of those materials. Challenges do not simply involve a person expressing a point of view; rather, they are an attempt to remove material from the curriculum or library, thereby restricting the access of others.” The following page is a graphic of such books. (see graphic next page)

Information found at www.ala.org/bbooks/challeng.html

“Censorship reflects a society’s lack of confidence in itself.” Potter Stewart/Associate Justice of the U.S Supreme Court (1915-1985)

BANNED & CHALLENGED BOOKS



Challenged for its focus on wizardry and magic.

Expurgated at the Venado Middle School in Irvine, CA (1992). Students received copies of the book with scores of words blacked out.

Banned from the advanced placement English reading list at the Lindale, TX schools (1996) because "it conflicts with the values of the community".

Responding to criticisms from an anti-pornography organization, the Ogden, Utah School District (1979) restricted circulation of Hansberry's play.

Censured for sexual content, racism, offensive language, violence and being unsuited to age group.

Four members of the Alabama State Textbook committee (1983) called for the rejection of this title because it is a "real downer."

“Censorship is advertising paid by the government.” Federico Fellini—Italian Film director

Perhaps because of their ubiquity, books, especially public and school library books, are among the most visible targets. Books are hardly the only target of would-be censors, however free expression is constantly challenged in the arts, in broadcast media, and on the Internet.

(from www.georgesuttle.com/censorship/index.shtml)

Following are some examples:



ART

Diego Rivera murals at Rockefeller Center - 1933

A mural portrait commissioned by Nelson Rockefeller for Rockefeller Center in New York City. Its subject was to be “human intelligence in control of the forces of nature.” The sixty-three feet by seventeen feet mural contained in the center a portrait of Lenin. On May 22, 1933 Rivera was called down from his scaffold where he was still working on the unfinished mural. He was handed a check for the balance of his fee, and informed that he had been dismissed. Within thirty minutes the mural had been covered by tarpaper and a wooden screen. The mural was eventually removed from the wall.

FILM

Egyptian Cinema

1914: The censorship bureau demanded from all filmmakers that they in no way criticize foreigners, civil servants or religion. It is forbidden to show the lifestyle of farmers, workers, or to express any opinions on nationalistic or neutral political views favorable towards socialism. It was not permitted to criticize the past or present monarchy.

As a result it is still impossible today for an Egyptian filmmaker to show union movements of farmers, workers or students.

American Cinema

The Last Temptation of Christ

By Martin Scorsese (1988). An adaptation of Nikos Kazantzakis' novel.



A movie that attempts to grapple with the sacred paradox of the figure of Jesus: how he experienced temptation and conquered it.

One of the final passages raised the controversy as it depicted Christ on the cross, in great pain, hallucinating and imagining what his life would have been like had he been free to live as an ordinary man.

Time Magazine (August 15, 1988) devoted nine pages to discuss the controversy over the movie and debated over the identity of Christ among theologians. Religious groups were horrified that Christ was portrayed as fallible and not the perfect Son of God that so many Hollywood epics of bygone eras portrayed. Threats on Scorsese were made, and several theaters were firebombed. Despite the controversy, Scorsese received an Oscar nomination for Best Director.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948

Article 19

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

“Censorship is the mother of metaphor” Jorge Luis Borges/Argentine poet

MUSIC

Then

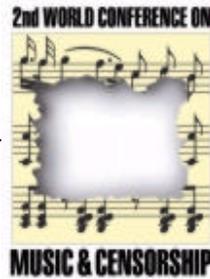
1950 – A band called “The Weavers” had been blacklisted due to the leftist political beliefs and associations of several member.

1954 - The ABC network bans the Rosemary Clooney hit “Mambo Italiano” because it did not meet the “standards for good taste.” In April, Chicago radio stations receive 15,000 complaint letters (in less than a week) protesting their broadcast of rock music.

1955 – Officials in San Diego and Florida police warn Elvis Presley that if he moves at all during his local performances, he will be arrested on obscenity charges.

1958 – The Mutual Broadcasting System drops all rock and roll records from its network music programs, calling it “distorted, monotonous, noisy music.”

1966 - The Beatles censured: Capitol Records pulled the *Yesterday and Today* album cover featuring a “butcher” photo.



Now

2000 – In New York the police called for the cancellation of Bruce Springsteen’s performances after he debuts a song about the shooting of Amadou Diallo entitled “American Skin.”

2001 – Clear Channel Communications (largest owner of radio stations in the US) releases a list of more than 150 “lyrically questionable” songs that the stations may want to pull from their playlists.

2002 - WAL-MART BANS EMINEM
Wal-Mart has banned the sale of the CD titled *The Eminem Show* at all of their stores. Wal-Mart's official CD sales policy states, in part: “Wal-Mart will not stock music with parental guidance stickers.” *Source: Mass Mic News*

2001- International news on Myanmar radio is blurred on purpose by the military government
“In a little shop in Bagan, I was paying attention to the radio, but couldn’t understand the news. My father told me that the government was blurring the international news on purpose. This way the military could not be accused of not being open to foreign countries but the population is unable to clearly be informed, which is what they want. Unfortunately there is no proof of it.”

Personal statement from Arts Exchange Representative, Cendrillon Savariau

Entertainment

a. Entertainment / Technology

26



b. Discussion Questions

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c. Movie / Book Timeline

Poster Insert

d. Bibliography

30



e. Web Site Sources
Cited in the Study Guide

31

More & More - People clamor for technology: faster computers, faster connections to internet, computerized “chat rooms” that enable us to “speak” to faceless strangers, more comprehensive cell phone networks, pagers, more powerful cars, voice mail, palm pilots, etc. People seem petrified of wasting time.

Bradbury believed that the presence of fast cars, loud music, and a constant barrage of advertisements created a life with far too much stimulation in which no one had the time or ability to concentrate. Further, he felt people regarded the huge mass of published material as too overwhelming, leading to a society that read condensed books (very popular at the time Bradbury was writing) rather than the real thing.

Challenge Question

- Ask your classroom: What do you think is at the heart of our desire for greater and greater speed? What do we gain? What do we lose?

[**Television** is] “...a really dreadful influence on all of us. Don't ever look at local television news again. It's all crap. There's no news, there's no information. It's negative, negative, negative. You look at that, and you think the world is coming to an end.” “Television is very dangerous. Because it repeats and repeats and repeats our disasters instead of our triumphs.” Ray Bradbury - Paris Voice 1990

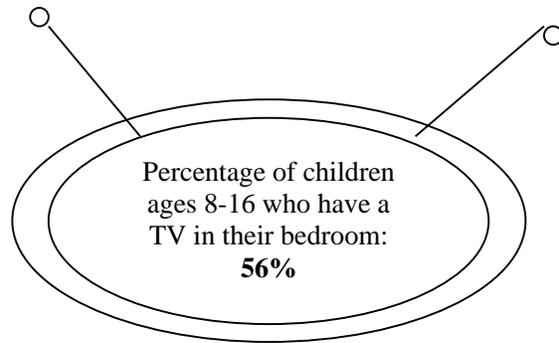
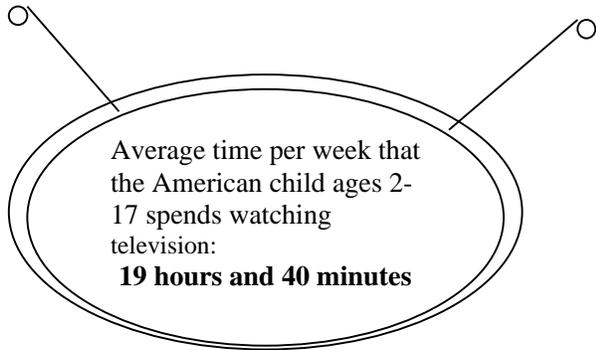


FACT: FACT: FACT:

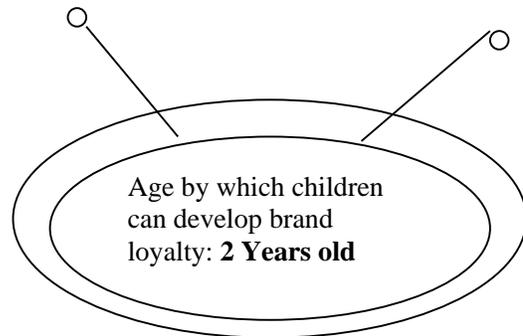
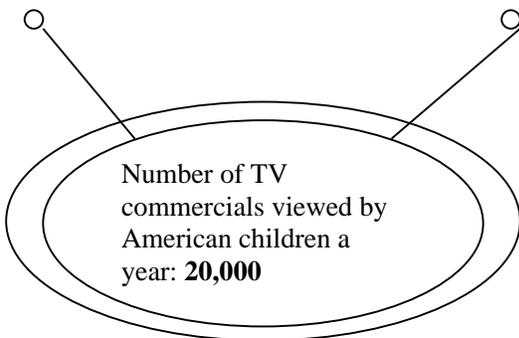
By the late **1950's**, American television was filled with cookie-cutter sitcoms, predictable westerns and violent dramas. Critics howled, but to no avail; viewership continued to rise. It all came to a head in 1959, when US television faced a real public relationship crisis with the "quiz show scandal." Viewers learned that clean-cut and intelligent Charles Van Doren, who won \$129,000 on the quizzer *Twenty-One*, had been given the answers in advance, and was coached to pause and hesitate for dramatic effect (for a recent movie about this incident see *Quiz Show*).

In *Fahrenheit 451*, the society has abandoned books in favor of hollow, entertainment and instant gratification. Every home has a TV that fills the walls, the shows presented seem a lot like our “reality” TV shows of today. How far are we from Bradbury’s broadcast TV “families?” Montag’s wife exclaims: “If we had a fourth wall [of wall-size TV screen]. Why it’d be just like this room wasn’t ours at all, but all kinds of exotic people’s rooms.” (p. 22)

FACTS AND FIGURES ABOUT OUR TV HABIT TODAY:

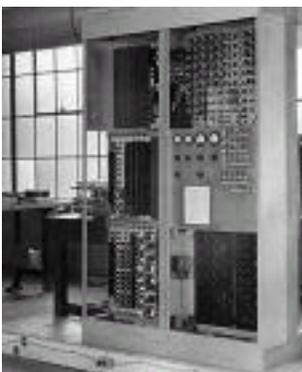


“Television is a chewing gum for the Eyes.” Frank Lloyd Wright



“The remarkable thing about TV is that it permits several million people to laugh at the same joke and still I feel lonely.” T.S. Eliot

Advances in technology are phenomenal for a short period of time.
Picture of a computer after WWII



Electrical Numerical Integrator And Calculator

ENIAC is commonly accepted as the **first successful high-speed electronic digital computer** and was used from **1946 to 1955**. Since then, advances were made to challenge a high capability. The 60's were the turning point concerning efforts to develop and design the fastest possible computer with the greatest capacity.

From www.softlord.com

Major film of the decade:

“The golden age of science fiction”

There was a deluge of science fiction movies in the 50’s. For the most part, the American public viewed technological progress in an optimistic light. Even though the fear of atomic war gave the American audience reasons to fear technological and scientific advances, other factors like the paranoia about communist invasion, postwar advances in medicine and industry and the opening of the space race gave Americans more reasons to embrace the US’s increasing technological sophistication. Hollywood science fiction films of this period, however, reflect a much darker vision of the consequences of over-reliance on technology.

Beneath the gleaming surface of advanced technology as imagined in the films of the 50’s, was the menace associated with the growing field of Artificial Intelligence.

1951 _____ *The Day the Earth Stood Still*

1951 _____ *Invaders from Mars*

1951 _____ *Them!*

1954 _____ *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*

“Science fiction is the history of towns and cities yet unbuilt, ghosting our imaginations and lifting us to rise up and find hammers and nails to build our dreams before they blow away.” Ray Bradbury



Discussion - Questions

For your classroom

1. Have students look at the importance of entertainment in their own lives or in the lives of their friends (what sorts of entertainment do they enjoy: Internet, movies, music, TV etc...) How much of their time do they spend consuming entertainment?
1. Look at how entertainment is marketed to us and how it affects us.
1. Research how commercials and advertisements are produced to be both entertaining and convincing.
1. Research addiction and its causes. Is entertainment addictive? Can it serve the same purposes as drugs or alcohol?
1. Beatty suggests that mindless entertainment can weaken or destroy the mind. Is there evidence of this? Examine research done on the effects of different forms of entertainment on our ability to think, learn and comprehend.
1. Look at Beatty's speech to Montag (pages 53-62). What techniques does Beatty advocate for keeping people happy? What parallels do you see between Beatty's ideas and our own society, especially in the area of occupying people's minds with trivia?
1. Examine stress, pressure and speed in life and how they effect us. (Look, for example at "road rage" and other such phenomena.) How do addictions (drugs, alcohol, television, entertainment, etc.) relate?
1. Read *Fahrenheit 451* and compare the book with the play you have just seen: what are the differences.
1. Pick a year in the Movie/Book Timeline (on the following page) that you have read and seen. What are the differences between the two? Which one were you more interested in? What was cut or censored?
1. Imagine the next chapter of *Fahrenheit 451*. What is Montag doing in the future? Describe the new society around him?

Source Key Neilsen Media Research 2000, McNeal, 1992. Cited by National Institute on Media and the Family, 2000.



Books by Ray Bradbury

Dark Carnival (1947) - Stories
The Martian Chronicles (1950) – Novel (Stories)
The Illustrated Man (1951) – Stories
No Man Is An Island (1952) - Pamphlet
Fahrenheit 451 (1953) – Novel
The October Country (1955) - Stories
Dandelion Wine (1957) – Novel
A Medicine for Melancholy (1959) - Stories
Something Wicked This Way Comes (1962) – Novel
R is for Rocket (1962) - Stories
The Anthem Sprinters and Other Antics (1963) – Play
The Machineries of Joy (1964) – Stories
A Device out of Time (1965) – Play
S is for Space (1966) – Stories
I Sing the Body Electric (1969) – Stories
Old Ahab's Friend to Noah, Speaks His Piece (1971) - Poetry
Pillar of Fire: A Drama (1972) - Play
Zen in the Art of Writing and the Joy of Writing: Two Essays (1973)
That son of Richard III (1974) – Pamphlet
Long After Midnight (1976) – Stories
Twin Hieroglyphs that Swim the River Dust (1978) – Poetry
Beyond 1984: Remembrance of Things Future (1979)
The Poet Considers His Resources (1979) – signed limited edition
This Attic Where the Meadow Greens (1979) – signed limited edition
The Ghosts of Forever (1980)
Stories of Ray Bradbury (1980) – Stories
There Is Life on Mars (1981)
The Veldt (1982) – Story
Dinosaur Tales (1983) – Stories
Forever and the Earth (1984) – Radio Dramatization
Fahrenheit 451 / The Illustrated Man/ Dandelion Wine/ The Golden Apples Sun/ The Martian Chronicles (1987) – Collection of previous novels and stories.
The Dragon (1988) – Story
Zen in the Art of Writing (1990) – Essays on the art and craft of writing
Ray Bradbury On Stage: A Chrestomathy of Plays (1991) – Collection of previously published stage plays
Green Shadows, White Whale (1992) - Novel
The Stars (1993) – Poem
Quicker than the Eye (1996) - Stories
Driving Blind (1997) – Stories
Ahmed and the Oblivion Machines (1998) – Juvenile Fiction
From the Dust Returned: A Family Remembrance (2001) – Novel
One more for the Road: A new Short Story Collection (2002)

For a more extended listing of his books, go to: www.spaceagecity.com/bradbury/books.htm



WEB SITE SOURCE

Cited in the Study Guide

Censorship:

Avclub.theonion.com/reviews/cinema
Forerunner.com
Suntimes.com/ebert/ebert_reviews
Caselaw.lp.findlaw.com/data/constitution/amendment01
Ericnuzum.com/banned/
Serendipity.mgnet.ch
cd.sc.ehu.es/fileroom/documents/cases/60diegorivera.html
codoh.com/F451.html

Science fiction

magicdragon.com/ultimateSF/timeline1960
wikipedia.com/wiki/science
Panix.com/~gokce/sf_defn.html

Entertainment

Softlord.com/comp/

Narrative:

Classicnote.com/classicnotes/titles/fahrenheit/shortsumm.html
Planetpapers.com
Bookreporter.com/reviews
Sparknotes.com/lit/451/
Randomhouse.com/highschool/guides/fahrenheit451.html
Salon.com/people
Theonionavclub.com
Cfht.hawaii.edu
Napanet.net
Timesdaily.com/news/stories

Ray Bradbury:

Pr.caltech.edu/commencement/00/c2kbradburyspeech.html
Members.aol.com
Raybradbury.com
Frugalfun.com/raybradbury.html
Dragoncon.org/people/bradbur.html
Spaceagecity.com/bradbury
Catch22.com/~espana/Sfauthors
Sfsite.com/isfdb-bin/exact_author.cgi?Ray_Bradbury

Political environment:

Port-aransas.k12.tx.us/hs/hist/mccarthy1.html
English.upenn.edu/~afilreis/50s/schrecker-legacy.html
-----blacklist.html
-----congcomms.html
-----menace-emerges.html
-----state-agenda.html

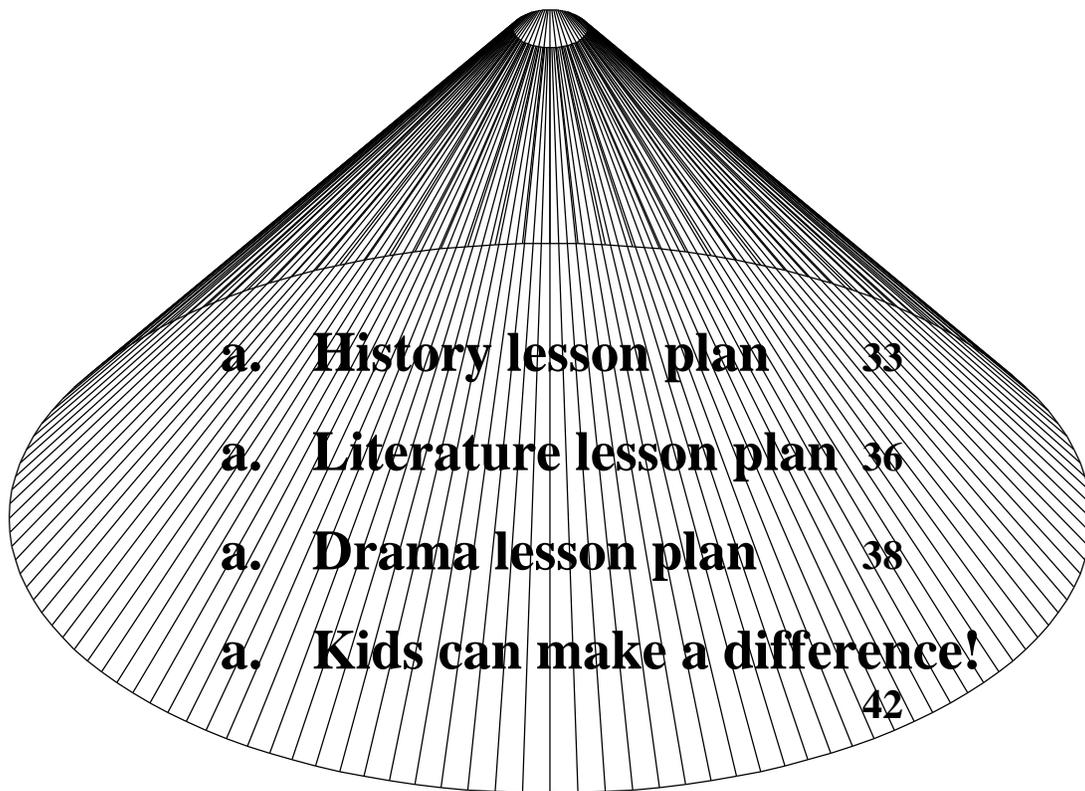
Atomic age:

atomicarchive.com/Tieline/time1950.shtml
english.upenn.edu/~afilreis/50s/morrison.html

Fahrenheit 451

Lesson Plans for your classroom:

Immerse your students in the world of *Fahrenheit 451*
with exciting lesson plans from Steppenwolf resident artists



“Whoever would overthrow the liberty of a nation must begin by subduing the freeness of speech.” Benjamin Franklin

History Lesson Plan

DISCUSSION POINTS, WRITING POINTS, AND ACTIVITIES FOR A SOCIAL STUDIES CLASS

By Robin Chaplik

“Aren’t you going to ask me about last night?” he said.

“What about it?”

“We burnt a thousand books. We burnt a woman... We burnt copies of Dante and Swift and Marcus Aurelius.”

- Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury

Fahrenheit 451, by Ray Bradbury, creates a world where books, the records of knowledge, are illegal. They are burned along with the homes that harbor them. This fictional world of Bradbury’s is the antithesis of our democratic society in America. We live in a country ruled by a marketplace of ideas. This is because, for the most part, we have free and equal access to books. **Books contain ideas.**

WRITING POINT:

List three reasons if you had power over people why their literacy could threaten your power.

DISCUSSION POINT:

How is knowledge power? How do we benefit from ideas and learning different points of view?

DISCUSSION POINT:

Why would those in control of a society want to suppress knowledge? Why are ideas “dangerous?”

DISCUSSION POINT:

How do books represent us (mankind)?

DISCUSSION POINT:

Is there an idea you would be willing to die for?

WRITING POINT:

If all books in the world were going to be burned tomorrow and you could only save one, which would it be and why?

WRITING POINT:

If you were going to write a book, what would it contain? What things do you think are important for the world to know? Write a page of “your” book.

ACTIVITY #1: Put a book on trial.

The American Library Association (ALA) celebrates Banned Books Week from September 21-28, 2002. Their slogan is “**Celebrate Your Freedom to Read.**”

“The message of Banned Books Week is more than the freedom to choose or the freedom to express one’s opinion even if that opinion might be considered unorthodox or unpopular. The essential message of Banned Books Week is the importance of ensuring the availability of those unorthodox or unpopular viewpoints to all who wish to read them.”

- [From the ALA’s website: www.ala.org]

Many books are challenged or banned in this country. Challenged books are those that people and organizations would like to have restricted or removed from schools and libraries. Banned books are those that have been removed.

Some of the reasons why books are challenged and banned:

1. They are considered sexually explicit
2. They contain offensive language
3. They depict drug use
4. They are unsuited to an age group
5. They present inflammatory information (i.e., religious or political ideals or discussion of sexual orientation)

Some of the most frequently challenged books include: (also see page 22 for the Challenged & Banned Books graphic)

The Bluest Eye by Toni Morrison
Of Mice and Men by John Steinbeck
Annie on my Mind by Nancy Garden
The House of Spirits by Isabel Allende
A Light in the Attic by Shel Silverstein

*For a complete list of “The 100 Most Frequently Challenge Books of 1990-2000,” go to:
<http://www.ala.org/bbooks/top100bannedbooks.html>
<http://www.ala.org/bbooks/top100.pdf>

Set up the trial!

- ⇒ Divide your class into groups
- ⇒ Have each group select a book from the “100 Most Frequently Challenged” list
- ⇒ Read it
- ⇒ Discuss its pros and cons (in relationship to its potential banning)
- ⇒ Prepare arguments for its “day in court”

Rules:

The “trials” should be staged for the benefit of the entire class (the jury). There should be “prosecution” arguments condoning the book’s banishment and “defense” arguments attempting to save the book. The jury votes after each presentation and presents its verdict. Allow time for discussion after each trial.

*CD’s and movies can also be put on trial. Many are certainly restricted in our society today.

ACTIVITY #2: Have your students inventory their school library

Which of the books on “The 100 Most Frequently Challenged” list are missing?

In honor of Banned Books Week: **select five of the missing books and write a proposal to the school librarian and principal explaining why they are important for students to have in the school’s library and should be ordered.** The proposals can be discussed and written in groups.

Note: If your school doesn’t have a library, propose one! Recommend books for its shelves. Or, start a library in your classroom.

TIP: Books, ideas, and writers are being threatened around the world. Visit Amnesty International’s banned books portion of its website at <http://www.amnestyusa.org/bannedbooks> for information and posters for your classroom.

Literature Lesson Plan

By Kimberly Senior

To increase understanding and appreciation of Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* through exploration of oral tradition, try this lesson plan in your next English class! This lesson plan is applicable to grade levels five to twelve and can also be connected to History or Drama classes.

General goals:

1. To draw parallels between oral tradition and cultural storytelling as a means of preserving our stories and histories and to further explore the tragedy and importance of book burning in Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*.
2. To increase students' personal identification with the book by using their own stories.

Specific objectives:

- a. Teacher will share with students extant stories that help us to better understand history and context
- b. Students will collect/remember oral histories of their families and/or cultures
- c. Students will interview one another and attempt to collect each other's stories
- d. Students will retell classmates' stories

Materials:

Extant stories, poems, or songs representative of time or culture that serve as an example of how oral tradition and storytelling have preserved history.

Examples: rap songs, *Beowulf*, the Bible, the *Odyssey*, *Tale of Two Cities*, *The Woman Warrior*, *Native Son*, Amy Tan books, etc. Anything that feels representative of a cultural experience!

Anticipatory set:

Review chosen pieces of text and discuss their relevance in preserving traditions, culture, and experience

Discuss Faber's comments:

"[Books] were only a receptacle, yes, a place where we stored things we were afraid of forgetting...The magic is the way in which they stitched the patches of the universe together for us."

Discuss the end of the story where Montag meets Aristotle, etc. and "becomes" Poe

A fun way to discuss oral tradition! If there is time, play a game of telephone, where students pass a sentence from one end of the room to the other by whispering in each other's ear and the final student repeats the sentence (often distorted) at the end.

Step by step procedures:

Students have either been asked to bring in a family or cultural story or they remember one on the spot, which they explore in a free writing session. This is up to the individual classroom teacher.

1. **In pairs**, students share their stories with each other orally. Student A tells Student B their story, Student B tells Student A their story. It is important that all of this is done without pen and paper.

2. **Individually**, students have about fifteen minutes to put together a presentation of their partner's story. This can be in the form of narrative, a poem, a collage, a song... be creative. Encourage students to use a medium that is representative of the tone, mood, and message of their partner's story.

3. **Students present each other's story**. Make sure there is time for the original storyteller to comment on the way their story has been told.

Closure:

Assign or encourage students to **find other examples in literature, art, and music** which help us to understand our world both past and present.

National standards and state goals addressed:

- State Goal 1: Read with understanding and fluency
- State Goal 2: Read and understand literature representative of various societies, eras, and ideas
- State Goal 3: Write to communicate for a variety of purposes
- State Goal 4: Listen and speak effectively in a variety of situations
- State Goal 5: Use the language arts to acquire, assess, and communicate information
- State Goal 25: Know the language of the arts
- State Goal 26: Through creating and performing, understand how works of art are produced
- State Goal 28: Use the target language to communicate within and beyond the classroom setting

Transformation - creating a character

By Ann Boyd

This lesson plan would be great to use in your Drama, English or History class *. Adapted for students in eight to twelve grades, this lesson plan will help in understanding the **basic elements of drama and character creation**.

*the lesson plan is connected to history by the understanding of people that are different from oneself.

General goals:

To create a creative environment that feels dynamic, productive and non-judgmental (there is no right or wrong!)

Specific goals:

To work collaboratively as a class and in partners in the development of character.

Plato said that character is plot and this definitely applies to Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*. In addition the class should allow time for discussion of dramatic structure and the tools used to make theater.

Anticipatory set

Warm-up: (five minutes)

The goal here is to wake up the body, voice and mind in preparation to work in a different, collaborative and free way. It is extremely important that you support one another by participating and allowing yourselves and your fellow students to play - many aspects of the creative process can feel childlike, strange and scary, but if you allow yourselves to work without judgement of yourself or others wonderful and wild things will begin to happen.

a. Create a creative workspace - if possible push the desks to the perimeter of the room and create a circle around an open space in the center, if this is not practical, students can work at their desks.

b. Shake up the space - look around the room, whenever you make eye contact with someone quickly trade places with them, try not to run into anyone as you cross the space.

c. Shakedown your body - as a class count five counts each for shaking out the right hand, the left hand, the right foot, the left foot, the shoulders, the head, your tail, then four, then three, two and one.

d. Stretch it out, connect to your **breath** - breathe in arms come up overhead, exhale and drop over (bending and stretching from the waist) three times.

e. Wake up your articulators - rub your hands together vigorously (lots of nerve endings to wake up in your hands and fingers) and choose a leader to lead you through the **tongue twister**:

Whether the weather is hot (all repeat)
Whether the weather is cold (all repeat)
We'll be together what ever the weather
Whether we like it or not.(all repeat)

Try it three times through, each time the words get sharper, tighter and faster.

Step by step procedures

Generating a character: (*ten minutes*)

Fahrenheit 451 revolves around a particular person in a particular place and the work he does. Through Guy Montag's personal struggle he paints a clear picture of the world. Working on the blackboard as a class...

- a. Decide on a **time period** - 100 years from now, 200 years ago, today, etc.
- b. Decide on a **place**, be as specific as possible - country, city, village.
- c. Create a list of the **type of work** that people do in this time and place (you can work off of a time and/or place you are exploring in other classes or you might choose to set it in the same time and place as Ray Bradbury set *Fahrenheit 451* and create your own vision of the future.)
- d. Choose one of the occupations listed to assign to a character and create a list of facts and questions you would need to know in order to **understand who this person is** - ask questions that get to know everything from the mundane to the deep spiritual yearnings of this character...here are a few examples:

- the basics - name, age, family, living situation, pets, etc???
- what is your greatest passion?
- what are you afraid of?
- what do you want out of life?
- who do you respect? why?
- what is your favorite food?
- how do you hope to be perceived?
- what is your favorite music?
- describe an important turning point in your life. How did it change you?
- etc, etc.....

Working independently: (fifteen minutes)

- a. From the list on the board choose one of the occupations. Do not agonize, work spontaneously, and go with your first impulse. (*one minute*)
- b. The teacher asks everyone to close their eyes and begin to see a character. The teacher leads the students through a visualization of their character by asking a selection of questions from the board - how old is your character, what are they wearing, what is on their mind...etc. (*four minutes*)
- c. **FREEWRITE** - after a good five minutes or so the teacher will ask you to go straight from your image of this character to the page - write a letter from your character's point of view. In this letter your character is introducing themselves to you - trying to give you the most vivid image possible of who they are, their lives, their world. (*ten minutes*)
- d. Choose three short passages that are particularly strong from your letter and underline them.

Working in pairs: (ten minutes)

- a. Introduce yourselves (your characters) to one another.
- b. Without telling your partner, decide what you (by you I mean your character) want, this is called **your intention**. For example you may want to impress them, to get them to love you, ask them to leave you alone, you may want to soothe them, scold them, etc...
- c. Decide on a **physical posture** that is in some way expressive of your character (curled up tight sitting in a corner, sprawled out on a chair, standing proud in the center of the room, fidgeting and pacing, etc.)
- d. Working **with the text** that you underlined, keeping your intention in mind speak your text to one another. **TAKE YOUR TIME!** You can repeat a word or sentence several times, the words themselves are not the most important thing, focus on your intention - it is most important that you convey what you want/need through whatever words you chose.
- e. Discuss your work with your partner - could they express their intention more clearly? How? Consider the energy of your characters, are they quick, slow, light, heavy? How does this affect their voice? Their body?

Sharing with the class: (ten minutes)

After everyone has had a chance to work together a bit, pairs volunteer to share their character work with the class. As a class, try to understand who they are, and what they want. If the class has a hard time guessing your intention share it and see if together you can understand how that character could express him or herself more clearly - or maybe challenge the performer to work with a totally different intention - still using the same text and the same vision of their character.

Conclusion: (five minutes)

In wrapping up the class discuss the elements of theater in general...

- Drama always involves CHANGE and/or transformation - what are some examples of the transformations of character that happen in *Fahrenheit 451*? In other stories, plays or movies?
- Discuss how lights, costume, set design, sound design and props influence our understanding of a play. How can these design elements support or even heighten the story?
- How do you think the director and actors influence the production?

National standards and state goals addressed:

State Goal 3: Write to communicate for a variety of purposes

State Goal 4: Listen and speak effectively in a variety of situations

State Goal 5: Use the language arts to acquire, access, and communicate information

State Goal 19: Acquire movement skills and understand concepts needed to engage in health-enhancing physical activity

State Goal 21: Develop team-building skills by working with others through physical activity

State Goal 25: Know the language of the arts

State Goal 26: Through creating and performing, understand how works of art are produced

KIDS CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

In Chelmsford, Massachusetts a twelve-year old started a petition and testified with friends at a town meeting to protect a wooded area from being destroyed by a condominium development project. The woods are still there.

Fourth Grade students ran a canned food drive at their school and donated the food to the local food pantry. Representatives of the classes helped prepare the food for distribution to the clients of the food pantry.

Twelve year-olds in Massachusetts testified at their state capitol to help pass a law that would ban smoking on public school grounds. The law was passed and several other states adopted similar laws.

**Cover the scope from your community to the world...
Don't want to live in a world like Fahrenheit 451?
Here are some ways you can start to make a difference**

HOW TO GET INVOLVED:

- 1 . **EDUCATION** : Get to know your community /Learn About The FACTS
- 2 . **VOLUNTEER** : Find Out What Organizations Are Doing To Help Your Cause
- 3 . **WRITE LETTERS** : Alert Government Officials, Newspaper Editors, Local Business Leaders, TV News Programs
- 4 . **GIVE TESTIMONY** : Stand Before Legislative Bodies and SPEAK OUT*
- 5 . **FUND-RAISING**: Help Your Organization By Having A Bake Sale, Talent Show, Community Auction, etc.

It is essential that you and your fellow classmates research your issue thoroughly before approaching city hall or the local school board

Examples Of **ORGANIZATIONS THAT MAKE**

Chicagoland Bicycle Federation / www.chibikefed.org

Amnesty International/ www.amnesty.org

National Center for National Literacy/ www.famlit.org

Greenpeace/ www.greenpeaceusa.org

Grassroots Collaborative/ www.grassroots.org

Activity

1. As a class, discuss local issues that concern you. List them on the board.
2. Choose an issue and discuss ways you as a class can make a difference.
3. Set some goals for yourselves and a timeline.
4. Create a plan of action.
5. Document your process and results as a class.
6. Publish an article on your success and challenges in your school and local papers.

More Reading, Less TV works!

Fast Facts

- More than 30,000 students have benefited from participating in *MRLTV* nationwide.
- Students who first identify themselves as poor readers are more than twice as likely to seek out a book after participating in *MRLTV* than before.
- The majority of those students say that *MRLTV* improves their reading.
- Students watch less TV and engage in more screen-free activities after participating in *MRLTV*.
- 94% of teachers would like to participate again.

“Students were really motivated to read and still are. This is a great program, and I’d love to do it with my students again next year.”

What is *More Reading, Less TV*?

More Reading, Less TV (MRLTV) is a critically-acclaimed program that boosts elementary school students’ enthusiasm for reading. By combining an extended period of reduced TV-watching with a fun, motivational curriculum that encourages reading for pleasure, *More Reading, Less TV* attacks schoolchildren’s wariness of reading as its core.

More than 3,000 students nationwide have benefited from *More Reading, Less TV* and the program gets results. As research shows, it improves students’ reading habits and attitudes toward reading, especially among those who identify themselves as poor readers. More than half of those students report that *MRLTV* significantly improves their reading ability. Students who believe they are good readers are more likely to approach reading positively, experiment with different types of literature, and read more difficult books. After just six weeks of *More Reading, Less TV*, students visit the library more often and are more likely to seek out or receive a book than before. In fact, children who initially rate themselves as poor readers are more than twice as likely to seek out a book after the program as they were before.

How does *More Reading, Less TV* work?

MRLTV is designed to supplement an existing reading or language art curriculum. Using the Teacher’s Guide produced by TV-Turnoff Network, teachers turn an old TV set to class and explain to their students the negative effects of watching too much TV. Then they offer a challenge: Let’s bury the television by reading. For each book read, the class is given a sheet of paper to cover up the old TV set. And when the set is completely buried, it’s time to celebrate! By tapping into children’s love of a challenge and teamwork *MRLTV* transforms reading from a tough chore to a fun choice.

The 1998 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) states that reading for pleasure significantly increases student’s reading ability. Reading for pleasure also exposes kids to a wider range of topics and styles so that future reading experiences will be more meaningful. By making reading fun and exciting, *More Reading, Less TV* helps kids foster a fondness for reading that will assist them in school and beyond.

Why is turning off the TV important?

Many studies demonstrate that turning off the TV boosts school performance. The NAEP, for instance, shows that kids who watch a lot of TV tend to read less proficiently than those who watch less. At all grade levels, students who watch an hour or less of TV per day consistently have better reading skills than other students. What’s more, the disparity in reading skills between those who watch a lot of TV and those who don’t increases at higher grade-levels. *MRLTV* helps halt this downward spiral by encouraging – and rewarding – children to read more and watch less.

How can I participate in *MRLTV*?

For more information about *MRLTV*, contact TV-Turnoff Network.

Real-Action is an initiative to raise awareness about TV-Turnoff Network programs. TV-Turnoff Network, 1611 Connecticut Avenue NW, 3A Washington, DC 20009 P(202) 518.5556 F(202)518.5560 www. Tvturnoff.org

