

Fahrenheit 451 Essay Assignment
Honors English 9
Ms. Mitchell's Class

DUE DATE: Monday, January 10, 2005

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

"Books are dangerous. They make you think . . . feel . . . wonder... They make you ask questions."

After reading the book carefully, each student will complete the following written assignment.

Put yourself in Guy Montag's place. Imagine that you have joined the wandering group of book lovers. Think of five (5) books you think would be worth saving from the firemen. These should be works you think would be of value to future civilizations, either for their ideas, their stories, their characters, their point of view.

Out of the 5 books, pick one (1) you would memorize and "become." (No, you are not actually going to memorize the book, just pick one you would memorize if you were in this situation.)

In a well-written essay of seven paragraphs (one for each book, with an introduction and a conclusion), tell which book you have selected and defend your choice in terms of the book's meaning and the contribution it can make to a better world. (One book per body paragraph.) Do this for four (4) of the books you have selected. The final body paragraph should address the work that you have decided to memorize and "become."

Tell why you have selected this book and why you think it more important than the others to memorize and "become."

Remember, good body paragraphs need a topic sentence and at least five more sentences, which illustrate and support the topic sentence. Be as specific as you can when naming and justifying each selection.

This essay should be typed, double-spaced, with one-inch margins all around. Your name, class name, teacher's name, and word count should appear in the upper left corner of the paper (MLA format). Don't forget to use present tense when writing about literature. And don't forget to run the essay through the spell-check on your word-processor, THEN read it over again carefully and check for the homophone errors spell-check is so fond of creating for you.

This assignment will also be the basis for discussion in English classes the first week of school. Consider the following issues in particular, with respect to *Fahrenheit 451*.

This is where the discussion will begin:

1. Censorship of books in today's society freedom of speech and the consequences of losing it.
2. The "dumbing down" of modern American society. The following lines from the novel should be considered: Remember, the firemen are rarely necessary. The public itself stopped reading of its own accord. You firemen provide a circus now and then . . .hardly necessary to keep things in line.
 - Have people stopped reading today?
 - Why do you think this has occurred?
 - Do you think we can do anything to get people interested in reading again? What?
3. The importance of remembering and understanding history.
4. Conformity vs. individuality.
5. The role of technology in our society. Are machines helpers to humans, hindrances, or enemies? Make a list of the current technology that is a part of everyday life. Be prepared to discuss the impact of each invention and share your conclusions with the class.
 - How the invention changed interpersonal relationships? Family structure? The environment?
 - What has the invention replaced? For better or worse?
 - Why do we need to control technology? How might we start? Who should control technology?

For students interested in conducting some research on censorship of books, here are some Internet sites associated with civil liberties, especially the First Amendment:

American Library Association Banned Books site: <http://www.ala.org/bbooks>
First Amendment Center site: <http://www.firstamendmentcenter.org/>

If you liked *Fahrenheit 451*, you might want to read one or more of these works. The book would be appropriate for the second semester's book report, but not the short stories:

1. *Dandelion Wine*, Ray Bradbury--A literary classic about boyhood, this novel is both imaginative and realistic.
2. "Harrison Bergeron," Kurt Vonnegut--The future again but this time

everyone by law must be "equal" or the same. This short story uses satire and humor to show one person fighting back. It includes some of the same themes as *Fahrenheit 451*.

3. "The Cold Equations," Tom Godwin--A suspenseful short story, set in a technological future, about a hard decision and its dreadful consequences.
4. "The Pedestrian," Ray Bradbury--Set in an ominous future, this short story leaves the reader wondering about the uses of technology.
5. "The Pit and the Pendulum," Edgar Allan Poe An extraordinary tale of horror set in another totalitarian society.
6. "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," Martin Luther King, Jr.--A powerful letter written by the American civil rights leader from his prison cell during the Civil Rights movement in 1963.