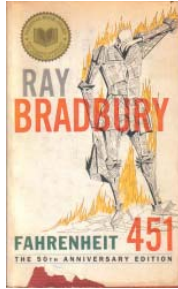


## *Fahrenheit 451* Excerpt



It was a pleasure to burn.

It was a special pleasure to see things eaten, to see things blackened and *changed*. With the brass nozzle in his fists, with this great python spitting its venomous kerosene upon the world, the blood pounded in his head, and his hands were the hands of some amazing conductor playing all the symphonies of blazing and burning to bring down the tatters and charcoal ruins of history. With his symbolic helmet numbered 451 on his stolid head, and his eyes all orange flame with the thought of what came next, he flicked the igniter and the house jumped up in a gorging fire that burned the evening sky red and yellow and black. He strode in a swarm of fireflies. He wanted above all, like the old joke, to shove a marshmallow on a stick in the furnace, while the flapping pigeon-winged books died on the porch and lawn of the house. While the books went up in sparkling whirls and blew away on a wind turned dark with burning.

Montag grinned the fierce grin of all men singed and driven back by flame.

He knew that when he returned to the firehouse, he might wink at himself, a minstrel man, burnt-corked, in the mirror. Later, going to sleep, he would feel the fiery smile still gripped by his face muscles, in the dark. It never went away, that smile, it never ever went away as long as he remembered.

From pages 3-4, Ballantine Books paperback edition, 1953.

## *Fahrenheit 451* Synopsis

Published in 1953, *Fahrenheit 451* takes place in a future society in which books have been outlawed and a fireman's job is not to extinguish fires, but to track down book owners and set fire to their books and homes.

Fireman Guy Montag performs his job without question. His wife Millie spends the majority of her time like most others in their society, consumed by television and ignoring the ever-present threat of nuclear war. One evening, Montag meets his young neighbor Clarisse McClellan who is full of vibrancy and questions about the world. Her enthusiasm enralls Montag and he finds himself questioning his profession, the state of his life and the society in which he lives. Shortly after he steals a book from a home he has been sent to burn. When Montag returns home, he hides the book and is shocked to learn that Clarisse has been killed by a speeding car.

The next day Montag says he is ill and does not go to work. His boss, Captain Beatty, senses Montag's growing ambivalence about his life and career and visits him at home. He explains the reasons why books have been banned and lectures Montag on the superiority of their current society. After Beatty leaves, Millie finds Montag's hidden book and he shows her more books that he has collected from the homes he has helped burn. He also decides to start reading the books.

To gain a better understanding of what he is reading, Montag tracks down Faber, a retired professor and suspected book owner whom the firemen have investigated in the past.

Montag returns to work and when the firemen are called to an alarm, he is dismayed to discover that it is his own house that is to be burned. Beatty orders him to burn the hidden books and the house and then tries to have him arrested. Montag kills Beatty and flees to Faber for assistance. Faber tells Montag about a group of intellectuals who live outside the city and how to find them. When nuclear bombs destroy the city, the men decide the time is right to return and help rebuild a society where books and free thought can flourish.

# Ray Bradbury Biography



The award-winning author of more than 500 literary works, Ray Bradbury was born in Waukegan, Illinois on August 22, 1920. After moving frequently, his family settled in Los Angeles.

Bradbury started writing at a young age. His first published story, "Hollerbochen's Dilemma" appeared in the amateur fan magazine *Imagination!* in 1938. The 1950 publication of his book, *The Martian Chronicles*, established him as a leading American writer of science fiction.

In the spring of 1950, Bradbury began writing what was to become the novel *Fahrenheit 451* on pay-by-the-hour typewriters in the basement of the UCLA Library. He finished the first draft, a shorter work entitled *The Fireman*, in just nine days. At the urging of his publisher, Bradbury expanded the story to its present form and *Fahrenheit 451* was published in 1953. Today it is one of Bradbury's most popular and widely read works of fiction.

Though Bradbury is most widely regarded as a science fiction writer, he has not limited himself to the genre, having produced works of drama and psychological realism. He has also written extensively for TV, radio, theater and film. He has won numerous awards including the Nebula, Prometheus, and O. Henry Prize. He has been named a Science Fiction Writers of America Grand Master and he won the Gandalf Award for Lifetime Contribution to Fantasy in 1980. He has been nominated for an Academy Award, won an Emmy, and has a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

In August of 2000 Bradbury said, "The great fun in my life has been getting up every morning and rushing to the typewriter because some new idea has hit me. The feeling I have every day is very much the same as it was when I was twelve. In any event, here I am, eighty years old, feeling no different, full of a great sense of joy, and glad for the long life that has been allowed me. I have good plans for the next ten or twenty years, and I hope you'll come along."

Ray Bradbury lives in Los Angeles and has four daughters and eight grandchildren.

## ***Fahrenheit 451* Reading Guides**

NoveList Database: To access from the Carlsbad City Library webpage ([www.carlsbadlibrary.org](http://www.carlsbadlibrary.org)), click on link to "Online Databases." Next, select "Research and Information" and then "NoveList."

### **Other online guides**

[www.sparknotes.com/lit/451](http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/451)

[www.readinggroupguides.com/guides3/fahrenheit\\_4511.asp](http://www.readinggroupguides.com/guides3/fahrenheit_4511.asp)

### **Web Sites about Ray Bradbury**

Official website of the author:  
[www.raybradbury.com](http://www.raybradbury.com)

Ray Bradbury Online:  
[www.spaceagecity.com/bradbury](http://www.spaceagecity.com/bradbury)

### **Selected Books by Ray Bradbury**

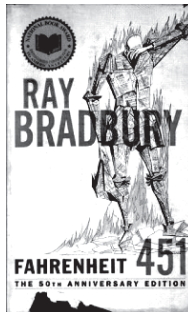
The Martian Chronicles, 1950  
The Illustrated Man, 1952  
Golden Apples of the Sun, 1953  
Dandelion Wine, 1957  
Something Wicked this Way Comes, 1962  
I Sing the Body Electric, 1969  
Long After Midnight, 1976  
Death is a Lonely Business, 1985  
Quicker than the Eye, 1996  
From the Dust Returned, 2001  
Let's All Kill Constance, 2003  
The Cat's Pajamas, 2004

## Special Events

### ***An Evening with Ray Bradbury***

Saturday, April 8 at 7pm  
Ruby G. Schulman Auditorium  
Carlsbad City Library, 1775 Dove Lane

A highlight of the Carlsbad Reads Together program will be an appearance by the acclaimed author, Ray Bradbury. In addition to discussing his work, Mr. Bradbury will be signing copies of his books. Books will be available for purchase.



### ***A Look Behind Fahrenheit 451***

Thursday, April 20 at 7pm  
Ruby G. Schulman Auditorium  
Carlsbad City Library, 1775 Dove Lane

A lively panel discussion exploring the themes of *Fahrenheit 451*.

Both events are free and open to the public on a first-come, first-served basis. Seating is limited. For additional information, please visit [www.carlsbadlibrary.org](http://www.carlsbadlibrary.org).

## Discussion Groups for *Fahrenheit 451*

Read Ray Bradbury's acclaimed classic, *Fahrenheit 451*, and then join other community members for a lively discussion about the book.

Book discussion dates and times:

**Carlsbad City Library on Dove Lane**  
**1775 Dove Lane**  
**Gowland Meeting Room**

Wednesday, April 5 at 2pm

Thursday, April 6 at 7pm

Monday, April 24 at 7pm

Monday, April 10 at 3:30pm (teen group)

**Georgina Cole Library**  
**1250 Carlsbad Village Drive**  
**Community Room**

Tuesday, April 4 at 7pm

Thursday, April 13 at 2pm

**Centro de Información**

Tuesday, April 18 at 6pm (Spanish-language)

For more information, call (760) 602-2038 or visit [www.carlsbadlibrary.org](http://www.carlsbadlibrary.org). For assistance with starting a book club, call Reference Librarian Kathy Ragland at (760) 434-2933.

## ***Fahrenheit 451* Discussion Questions**

1. What do you like or dislike the most about Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*?
2. The novel was written in 1953. Does it seem dated? Why or why not?
3. How plausible is the future envisioned in this novel? Specifically, do you think the author provides a convincing account of how censorship became so rampant in this society?
4. How do the contrasting personalities of Mildred and Clarisse depict the essential conflict of Montag?
5. Captain Beatty quotes history, scripture, poetry, and philosophy and is obviously well read. Why hasn't he been punished? And why does he review the books he's read with such contempt?
6. How does Montag feel as he burns his own house? Why do you think he feels this way?
7. Montag turns to books to rescue him; instead they help demolish his life – he loses his wife, job, and home; he kills a man and is forced to be a nomad. Does he gain any benefits from books? If so, what are they?
8. If you had to memorize one book, which one would you choose and why?
9. Do you think the author wants the reader to believe that Montag will be happy with the book people? In general, would you say that this novel ends on an optimistic or pessimistic note?

# Resources on Censorship

## Books

1. Banned in the USA: A Reference Guide to Book Censorship in Schools and Public Libraries. Greenwood Press, 2002.
2. Censored 2005: The Top 25 Censored Stories. Seven Stories Press, 2004.
3. Green, Jonathon. The Encyclopedia of Censorship. Facts on File, 2005.
4. Nakaya Andrea C., ed. Censorship: Opposing Viewpoints. Greenhaven Press, 2005.
5. 100 Banned Books: Censorship Histories of World Literature. Checkmark Books, 1999.

## Websites

American Booksellers Foundation for Free Expression:  
[www.abffe.com](http://www.abffe.com)

American Civil Liberties Union:  
[www.aclu.com/freespeech/censorship/index](http://www.aclu.com/freespeech/censorship/index)

American Library Association, Office for Intellectual Freedom  
[www.ala.org/ala/oif/intellectual.htm](http://www.ala.org/ala/oif/intellectual.htm)

Free Expression Network  
[www.freeexpression.org](http://www.freeexpression.org)

National Coalition Against Censorship  
[www.ncac.org](http://www.ncac.org)

## Sources about Mr. Bradbury:

1. Bradbury, Ray. Bradbury Speaks: Too Soon From the Cave, Too Far From the Stars. New York: William Morrow, 2005.
2. Weller, Sam. The Bradbury Chronicles: the Life of Ray Bradbury. New York: William Morrow, 2005.