

Study Guide Questions for Ray Bradbury's science fiction novel *FAHRENHEIT 451*

**\*Annotate as you read. Write notes, questions, comments in your book. Highlight, underline, or label important information and quotes.**

**\*\*Keep track of allusions, references to someone or something culturally known. Define as many as you can.**

**\*\*\*Note the imagery and figurative language. Underline or highlight examples of creative word choice.**

**Part I: The Hearth and the Salamander**

1. What do the numerals "451" represent?
2. Explain the symbols of the salamander and the phoenix. On what items do these symbols appear?
3. Describe Guy Montag before, during and after his metamorphosis.
4. How does Clarisse act as a dramatic foil (contrasting character) for Mildred? How does Clarisse act as a catalyst for Montag?
5. What future technology provides escape from reality? Discuss short and long range effects of escapism. Is our own society escaping from reality?
6. After working on Mildred, the machine operator tells Montag that "we get these cases nine or ten a night." What does this reveal about the emotional stability of the populace? What other forms of violence are rampant? Why do you think this society has become so violent?
7. Write a paragraph summary of the history of firemen. Note any ironies.
8. Explain the incident of the woman who burned with her books. How does this incident affect Montag?
9. Why are birds an appropriate symbol for books?
10. Why is the centrifuge an appropriate symbol to describe Montag's society? In what ways might our society be compared to the action of a centrifuge?

**Part II: The Sieve and the Sand**

11. How does Montag's society program thoughts so completely that "firemen are rarely necessary"?
12. What has this society's wall-to-wall television done to Christ?
13. After Montag forces Mildred to read through the books with him, both of them choose their respective futures. Explain their almost irrevocable choices.
14. Montag's subway ride to Faber's house evokes a flashback to his childhood and brings a tear to his eye once again. Explain the two similar situations and the significance of the title of Part II.
15. Why is Faber so critical of himself and pessimistic about the world when he is first introduced? Why is he then willing to become Montag's mentor?
16. Faber's philosophy about the use of books and about society in general is thought to be close to Ray Bradbury's own view. Explain the three things necessary for books to be of value.
17. Why are the characters on the television screen called "The Family"? What purpose are they supposed to serve in this society? What is the role played by the "White Clowns" seen on television?

18. Explain how *Fahrenheit 451*'s oppressive and regimented society grew out of censorship used to promote happiness and peace. Possibly comment on this perverse of a democratic ideal. Is it happening today?
19. Explain the indifference and callousness of society as illustrated by Mildred and her friends Mrs. Phelps and Mrs. Bowles. What kinds of family relationships are considered normal? How are children treated "like laundry"?
20. Why do you think Mrs. Phelps cried in response to Montag's reading of the poem "Dover Beach"?

### **Part III: Burning Bright**

21. How does Montag feel as he burns his own house? Why do you think he feels this way?
22. What revelation does Montag have about Beatty after he kills him? How does Beatty's ability to quote from literature actually foreshadow this understanding of his character?
23. Describe Montag's escape – step-by-step.
24. Why was Montag's capture depicted on television even though he had escaped?
25. Describe the book people and their mission.
26. How is Granger a dramatic foil for Captain Beatty?
27. What happens to the city? What – oddly enough -- does Montag finally remember about himself and Mildred?
28. Why is the mirror an important symbol? In what ways might a mirror be a symbol for our own society?
29. Discuss the dual meaning of Part III's title "Burning Bright."
30. Do you think the author wants the reader to believe that Montag will be happy with the book people? Give reasons to support your answer. In general, would you say that this novel ends on an optimistic or pessimistic note?

Show initiative by keeping a journal this summer, by writing a poem inspired by *Fahrenheit 451*, by researching censorship in America, by reading Walter M. Miller's science fiction novel *A Canticle for Leibowitz*. . .