
Fahrenheit 451 By Ray Bradbury: Idea Of The Negative Power Of Technology

Fahrenheit 451 is a dystopian sci-fi novel written by American screenwriter and author, Ray Bradbury. It tells the story of Guy Montag, a 'fireman' who, brought up against books, slowly learns the issues with his society and the power of knowledge and literature. Although written in the 1950s and set in 2053, the novel continues to be relevant in today's society due to the messages and ideas communicated throughout. Good morning, class. Today we will be going over the connections we can make between certain themes communicated in the novel over time and their relevancy to today's world. First of all, let's discuss the importance of context in a novel like this.

Context is defined as the environment, circumstances, and situations in which the text was written, set, and read in. It influences the message that the author aims to communicate in the novel. In this case, it was written in the 1950s, set in the 2050s and we are reading it in 2020. At the time of writing the novel, Bradbury had to take ideas relevant to his society and apply them to how he would imagine the world would be after developing for 100 years. In 2020, we see this process slowly occurring, where themes depicted in the novel such as the power of technology and the impact of censorship still remain relevant.

Ray Bradbury describes the idea of the negative, destructive power of technology throughout his novel. At the introduction of technology such as the television during his time, Bradbury expressed his fear of what it may become in the book. His concern was that books would no longer be required in our lives, that they would rather be seen as useless, or as he illustrates in Fahrenheit 451, dangerous. This is suggested on page 72 of the novel, when Beatty tells Montag that, 'Classics cut to fifteen-minute radio shows, then cut again to fill a two-minute book column, winding up at last as a ten- or twelve-line dictionary resume.' This not only describes cutting down on words and the length of texts over time, but also works as a metaphor for knowledge, and how society has gradually declined in intelligence and is no longer able to think for themselves.

The novel is also thought-provoking and confronting for us as readers. We can see this already beginning to occur in our contemporary age, with the introduction of hundreds of social media applications, constant upgrading and inventing of technologies, some that have increased in danger too, and a transfer from information being traditionally printed to finding everything with a browse online. For example, nuclear energy was created with the intention of using it as an electricity source. Instead, countries such as North Korea and the US have further developed this technology over time as a powerful weapon. In the novel, people have become desensitized to even the most dangerous of technologies. Fires lit by incredibly powerful technologies occur every day, but the people watch it as if it was a beautiful sight to see these inventions work. The people are told that no one dies in war so they would not worry but don't mind if they had instead jumped off buildings or committed suicide. Helicopters and bombers fly sky high, but to the citizens, this is a part of daily life. On page 22, it reads, 'the jet-bombs going over, going over, one two, one two, one two, six of them, nine of them, twelve of them, one and one and one and another and another and another, did all the screaming for him.' The use of repetition in this quote accentuates the number of jet bombs above and the incredible noise and

disruption created. But still, no neighbors emerge from their houses in shock. Bradbury wrote this book as a warning to us of the possibilities of technology. This makes us question whether the unnerving depiction described in the novel is truly fiction after all.

Another main idea presented in the novel is that of the unjustifiable reasons behind the occurrence of censorship. Knowledge can be seen as more powerful than physical strength. The more knowledge someone gains, the more powerful they become. (Beatty tell this to Montag on the page) Bradbury was influenced to write about this in his novel after the WWII Nazi Book Burning in the 40s, where the German government would burn anything that could potentially stray a citizen's mind away from the goal of purely German society, as well as the rise of McCarthyism in the 50s, where false judgments were made without evidence. He illustrates a society where the government will go to any extent to maintain peace and equality among citizens, and where they fear knowledge growing in the people. The greatest fear of the society in Fahrenheit 451 is for the people to believe that life isn't perfect and that they are not really living in a utopia, but in a world where so much is hidden from them. They also fear individuality and freedom of thought. In order to control this, their supposed only option is to destroy anything that could alter a person's thinking or make them think about anything they shouldn't be thinking about, which in this case is anything that could disrupt peace or make one man more intelligent than another – books.

Since the 50s, censorship hasn't ceased. We still see this recurring idea of the fear of knowledge rising throughout modern history, and it is unlikely that it will stop anytime in the near future, just as it continues in Bradbury's novel. An example of this is the Tiananmen Square Massacre, where student-led protests and riots were held against the censorship and communist ways of the Chinese Government. This video from The Guardian depicts the famous Tank-Man, a man who stood in defiance of the government and had the power to stop tanks so much larger than him. And why was this hidden by the government after the massacre? Because they didn't want citizens to believe they had any power or knowledge above the government. To them, there was nothing above their rule, which is clearly depicted in Fahrenheit 451. Anything against the government's plans is destroyed, including a human life such as Clarisse. They didn't agree with her curiosity and had the ability to murder her and plant it as an accident, and so they did.