
Features Of Dystopia In Angels And Demons And Fahrenheit 451

As author Dan Brown writes in the novel *Angels & Demons*, "Even the technology that promises to unite us, divides us. Each of us is now electronically connected to the globe, and yet we feel utterly alone." Compared to previous generations, citizens of modern society rely on technology more than ever. As foreseen by Ray Bradbury, author of *Fahrenheit 451*, the new age of the modern world revolves around technology, which has led to an increasing dystopian society. In *Fahrenheit 451*, Bradbury writes of a dystopian society set in a future where the government attempts to control what people think by censoring books. Instead of allowing individual creativity and thoughts, the government provides mindless activities and fast-paced media to the public. Fireman Guy Montag, whose job is to burn books, has an encounter with a seventeen-year-old girl that opens his eyes to the problems and reality of their society. Realizing that he is dissatisfied and unhappy with his life, Montag begins to search for a solution in a secret pile of books that he has stolen from his own fires. After escaping government tracking, Montag finds a group of intellectuals who believe in original thought and unconformity. With their help, Montag goes back into the destroyed society in hopes of fixing humanity. Throughout the novel, Montag transforms his mindset to be more alert and question not only his life, but the dangerous concepts that the government promotes by technology. As maintained by Bradbury's warnings about the dangers of a dystopian world in *Fahrenheit 451*, his predictions about current society are accurate. Life of citizens in *Fahrenheit 451* and today's society have become more insignificant and shallow, due to a decline in mental health assistance, a lack of emotional bonds in relationships, and a higher demand for faster, surface-level enjoyment.

In *Fahrenheit 451*, the mental health of citizens is put aside and suicide is a common matter, similar to today. One example of this is the decline in sense of empathy for others, especially around the topic of suicide. In *Fahrenheit 451*, the operator says, "We get these cases nine or ten a night. Got so many, starting a few years ago, we had the special machines built" (13). The way that the operator tells Montag about the normal recurrence of suicide everyday, and the machines specially built for reviving victims shows that suicide is very common for them, and they could not care less that their patients attempted to take their lives. Along with Mildred's overdose on pills, a fireman kills himself, and the old woman set herself on fire. Bradbury's repetition of suicide contributes to the bleak and empty tone of the novel. After Mildred overdoses and the machines revive her back to life, Montag has a realization that society is ignorant to the fact that citizens are willing to trade their unfulfilled lives with death. Failing to prevent suicide, the public proceeds without looking back on the tragedies of many. This proves that *Fahrenheit 451*'s society disregards the significance of humanity because there is no urgency to support each individual.

Bradbury's prediction of increasing suicide rates in modern day are accurate and proven with modern research. According to *The Suicide Rate for Young Adults has Tripled Since the 1950s*, "In the 1950s, there were only 7.5 suicides per 100,000 students. Today, 1 in 12 students have made a suicide plan." Compared to Bradbury's time in the 1950s, the rate of suicide has gone up tremendously, especially in teens. With the rise of technology creating less time to spend with others, more individuals are found to feel lonely and empty. This unpleasant state of mind make life seem more meaningless, and as a result, more people are inclined to take their lives.

The unhappiness within Montag's society and the idea that life has no true meaning are the results of many of the same factors that people in modern day face, such as lack of communication due to screens and media. The thoughts of loneliness and emptiness in one's life affects the increasing rate of suicide in modern day society and Fahrenheit 451's society, which is accurately predicted and warned by Bradbury.

The lack of passionate love and care in relationships is predicted by Bradbury in Fahrenheit 451. In Bradbury's society, many parents and children have no connection with each other, as well as husbands and wives. Bradbury writes, "There was a tiny dance of melody in the air, her Seashell was tamped in her ear again and she was listening to far people in far places, her eyes wide and staring at the fathoms of blackness above her in the ceiling" (39). Mildred appears to be withdrawn and distant when Montag is in the room, and she is always listening to mindless broadcasts with her earbuds. Bradbury is warning that technology can be very dangerous, and can decrease human interaction, which is a major aspect of life. The love between Mildred and Montag is not there, because Mildred is always in her own virtual reality world. The strain on their relationship is similar to many couples today, due to technology distracting time for communication.

Today, many lovers are plugged into a virtual realm, unaware that relationships take time and energy for good communication. If they are unable to meet these standards, there is a higher rate of divorce for a couple. According to *Technoference: How Technology Can Hurt Relationships*, Brandon McDaniel writes, "We found that women who reported more technoference in their couple relationship also reported more conflict over technology use, lower relationship satisfaction, more depressive symptoms, and lower life satisfaction." This shows that the constant need to check social media or other platforms can create tension with the connection between two people in a relationship. When one's partner chooses technology over them, it can lead to a feeling of being unloved and undesirable, which can lead to divorce. Divorce is a common end to relationships, where there are so many interruptions in time spent together that the relationship appears to standstill. Similar to Mildred's constant need to zone out her relationship and reality, many couples in relationships today have troubles keeping a healthy, interactive connection.

In Fahrenheit 451, Bradbury predicted people would gain happiness through surface-level entertainment by technology over novels. Entertainment by technology, such as listening to broadcasts by Seashells and watching TV parlor families, creates a lack of communication and promotes violence. Bradbury illustrates, "Abruptly the room took off on a rocket flight into the clouds; it plunged into a lime-green sea where blue fish ate red and yellow fish...Two minutes more and the room whipped out of town to the jet cars wildly circling an arena, bashing and backing up and bashing each other again. Montag saw a number of bodies fly in the air" (90). This describes the violent, frenetic activity that citizens in Fahrenheit 451 society watches on TV walls. The high excitement Mildred gets from her parlor shows takes over her real life, and she starts to love her TV family more than her real family. Montag realizes that the entertainment that his society watches promotes a violent world, and that there is no value to life. The government creates these pointless shows give off the message that violence is a pleasurable amusement. The higher demand for this fast-paced satisfaction establishes the idea that life is valueless.

Bradbury also warned about the threat of digital simulations, which can substitute for critical thinking. In today's society, addiction to social media exacerbates a scattered, shallow thinking

of individuals. The author of *Social Media Addiction*, Jena Hilliard, reports, "Social media use becomes problematic when someone views social networking sites as an important coping mechanism to relieve stress, loneliness, or depression. For these people, social media use provides continuous rewards that they're not receiving in real life, and end up engaging in the activity more and more." To relieve these undesirable moods, many people depend on social media to cope, which leads to an addiction. The continuous use of this leads to ignoring real relationships and responsibilities, as well as physical health. Similar to Mildred, social media users today rely on screen time to distract them from social interaction, which amounts to depression and unstable moods. By not connecting on any meaningful level with others, attempting to find happiness in meaningless entertainment leaves one ultimately empty. The addiction and demand for screen time to cope with one's life is an example of what Bradbury predicted in this modern, dystopian world.

In conclusion, Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* reflects current society because the use of technology that he warned about has turned into reality. Although having written the book in 1953, Bradbury accurately predicted that social isolation, depression, and an increase in the rate of suicides would be a problem of modern day society. He also predicted families would struggle loving one another without distractions by technology, which is proven a true event by today's reports. In *Fahrenheit 451*, when Montag found Granger and the book people, he realizes that these men do not conform to society's standards and he recognizes that society has become a slave to technology. With the help of the book people, Montag begins to start fixing humanity, by sacrificing his previous life in order to find a new life. The message that Ray Bradbury wanted to share by writing this book is the idea that books benefit society because they challenge individuals to imagine and stay away from conformity, unlike the oblivious, media-saturated world in *Fahrenheit 451* that gives shallow stimulation for an unoriginal, hopeless society.

Works Cited

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