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## The Forms Of Individualism in Fahrenheit 451 And Divergent

Individualism is defined as “a social theory favoring freedom of action for individuals over collective or state control” (Google). There are two major forms of individualism that are prevalent throughout writings. The first form is individual vs. society, and it occurs when the individual must change his or her ideals in order to fight their government. The second is individual vs. self, which is an internal fight between good and evil. In Fahrenheit 451, the protagonist, Guy Montag, is a fireman that starts fires instead of extinguishing them. Divergent is a story of Tris Prior, a teenage girl, that changes from her original faction, Abnegation, to become Dauntless. Both Tris and Montag experience both forms of individualism throughout their journey to freedom. Fahrenheit 451 and Divergent are dystopian novels in which the protagonists must become individuals to save their conforming societies.

Firstly, Guy Montag rebels against his society by reading books and thinking for himself. Montag is a fireman that starts fires in the homes of people that are breaking the law. In his society, reading anything that gives knowledge is illegal. In the beginning of the novel, Montag is dispatched to an elderly woman who had been caught with books. After burning the home down and killing the woman, Montag begins to question the ideals of his government. The society around Montag has conformed to the government and become technology droids. Guy Montag says, “Nobody listens any more. I can’t talk to the walls because they’re yelling at me. I can’t talk to my wife; she listens to the walls. I just want someone to hear what I have to say. And maybe if I talk long enough, it’ll make sense” (Bradbury 78). Montag struggles to express his feelings because the technology around him is slaving his wife and society. Technology has caused Montag’s society to conform to the government and its rules. According to Lauren Rohan, “The other path that follows in the vein of Fahrenheit 451 shows worlds where people have chosen apathy over activism and in turn have willingly given up their autonomy to those in authority. They chose stagnant and ignorant lives in exchange for supposed contentment.” Montag does not want to live a boring life like his wife Mildred, so he has to decide whether to read books or destroy them (8, 42). Montag meets with Faber, a previous professor, and they agree to work together. Faber gives Montag an earpiece so that they can communicate with each other. In the novel, Montag starts his separation from his society when he is eating with Mildred, Mrs. Phelps, and Mrs. Bowles. According to Kelcy Dolan, “Montag first breaches his puppet strings, making his first big individual leap when he brings out the book of poetry in front of Mrs. Phelps and Mrs. Bowles despite Faber’s warning” (11). Montag wants others to feel the effects of reading, but it ends up giving him an ultimatum. His boss, Beatty, tells Montag to come with him on a dispatch. Beatty drives Montag to his home and tells Montag to burn his home down along with his books. Montag burns his home down, but then Montag decides to burn Beatty to a crisp. Burning Beatty to death ultimately frees Montag from the world around him (Dolan 14). After leaving his burned home, Montag is on the run from the mechanical hound and the police. While Montag is fleeing, the newscaster is telling the people what is happening. The newscaster then asks all of the citizens to open their doors and look outside. According to Edward Eller, “Montag has a vision of the population acting in near perfect unison under the direction of a technological device- a truly frightening vision of humans turned into conforming automations”. Montag is able to escape from his society, and then he meets a group of book people. The book people have books memorized and show the importance of not conforming to

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the despotic government (3). Montag frees himself from his government with the help of Faber and books.

Secondly, Tris rebels against her government by choosing her own way in her conforming government. In Tris's government there are 5 factions: Amity, Abnegation Dauntless, Erudite, and Candor. Each faction focuses only on a single quality and the members of the faction must follow the rules. Tris's home faction was Abnegation which focuses on selflessness. All teenagers are required to take an aptitude test that determines which faction is best for them. Tris takes the test and discovers that she is Divergent which means she belongs to more than one faction. According to Elena Sharma, "By testing as a Divergent, unable to be categorized into just one of the factions, Tris represents a threat to this stagnant society and as such, functions as an agent of change and progress as her identity develops " (20). Divergence is punishable by death, and Tris has to decide what her new faction will be at the choosing ceremony. According to Jacob Anderson, "Factions limit individual power to gain collective peace, but that is the opposite of how the book phrases it:" Welcome to the Choosing Ceremony. Welcome to the day we honor the democratic philosophy of our ancestors, which tells us that every man has the right to choose his own way in this world"" (14). Against the wishes of her parents, Tris chooses Dauntless as her new faction. Tris choosing Dauntless was the first push into her separation from the world around her. During the Dauntless initiation, Tris must compete against others to remain in Dauntless; failing Dauntless would result in being factionless. Tris uses her abilities as a Divergent to pass Dauntless training. During this time, Erudite has been plotting to take control over all of the factions. The leader of Erudite, Jeanine, injects all of Dauntless with a serum that renders them controllable. Due to Tris's Divergence, she can withstand the serum and Tris must decide what action to take. Tris is faced with an external threat of war and an internal threat of becoming factionless. She believes that the only way for her to truly break free from the other factions is to embrace her Divergence. Tris fights back against Jeanine and becomes factionless.

Thirdly, Montag becomes his own antithesis when he meets Clarisee and begins reading books. Montag first begins his process of self-individualism when he talks to Clarisee. Montag is walking home after a burn when he meets a teenage girl named Clarisee. Clarisee asks him questions that Montag cannot answer. Clarisee asks him questions regarding his career as a fireman and why he chose to become one. "Montag is so used to making vapid small talk that he takes no time to answer Clarisee's decidedly difficult questions. His lack of thought during conversation demonstrates that he, like much of his society, does not think much about anything. They live life on autopilot" (Rohan 13). Montag is stunned by the simple yet hard to answer questions that Clarisee asked. Clarisee states, "'You're one of the few who put up with me. That's why I think it's so strange you're a fireman, it just doesn't seem right for you, somehow.'" He felt his body divide itself into a hotness and a coldness, a softness and a hardness, a trembling and a not trembling, the two halves grinding one upon the other " (Bradbury 21). No one in Montag's life had ever questioned why Montag was a fireman. After his conversation, Montag is left wondering about his true identity. His failure to answer simple questions about his identity strip the only identity he had (Dolan 7). As time goes on, Montag starts to question the ideals of his government but also his inner feelings. Montag begins to read books and he discovers his identity the more he reads. "Montag continually exists in a conflicting state of being both an individual, but also lacking the capability to understand his own individuality at the same time. Montag becomes his own antagonist at times, fighting against himself as he explores individualism within the text" (Dolan 1). Montag finally becomes his own individual self when Beatty orders him to burn down his home. At that moment, Montag realizes

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the only way for his life to completely change is by rebirth. "It is through the destruction though that Montag is cleansed of his old life, the old self he was by experiencing it one last time while simultaneously ridding himself of the space in which he has lived that existence [...] Burning his own home is Montag's method of accepting his own need to become entirely new" (Dolan 13). Like a phoenix, Montag finds his new identity through fire and rebirth.

Lastly, Tris finds her identity through Dauntless and her Divergence. Tris was in the faction Abnegation from her childhood until she was sixteen. In each faction, the citizens must always stick to their faction's rules. Elena Sharma claims Tris's first self-individual leap is during the Choosing Ceremony. Tris did not want to be like her parents, so she chose Dauntless to be free. Tris's identity also gets shaped during the Dauntless initiation (33). During Dauntless initiation, the initiates are continuously cut to find the strongest. Tris uses her hard work and Divergence to help her pass all of the tests. "She asserts her new identity when she tells herself, "I am proud. It will get me into trouble someday, but today it makes me brave" (Roth 41). No longer does Tris define herself by what she is not, such as not selfless or not good, but now she begins to build up her new identity with positive declarations such as this one" (Sharma 59). Tris truly discovers her new identity at the end of the novel. Realizing that she may become factionless, Tris is scared to embrace her Divergence. After being faced with war from Erudite, Tris realizes she has to be Divergent. Tris states, "I feel like someone breathed new air into my lungs. I am not Abnegation. I am not Dauntless. I am Divergent" (Roth 442). Tris is able to become her own individual by the Choosing Ceremony, Dauntless initiation, and her Divergence.

In conclusion, both Tris and Montag undergo identity changes to rebel against their society and become an individual. Montag rebels against his society by killing Beatty and reading books. Tris also rebels against her society by picking Dauntless as her faction and using her Divergence. Montag finds his own identity after he meets Clarisse and destroys all memory of his old life. Tris also finds her own identity after she survives the Dauntless initiation and then becomes fully Divergent. Both Tris and Montag rebelled against their society at the cost of their old life. Montag breaks the law and reads books, and Tris breaks the law and uses her Divergence. Also, Tris and Montag find themselves along their journey to rebellion. Montag looks within himself and realizes that reading books is more important than breaking the law. Tris chooses Dauntless instead of staying in Abnegation and embraces her Divergence. Fahrenheit 451 and Divergent are examples of individual versus self and individual versus society. Tris and Montag are similar because they both destroy their old lives to separate themselves from their totalitarian government. Fahrenheit 451 and Divergent show that the only way to individually change and rebel against conforming societies is personal sacrifice.