

Fahrenheit 451

Why read?

“Do you ever read any of the books you burn?” (Clarisse, p. 8)

“We need not to be let alone. We need to be really bothered once in a while. How long is it since you were really bothered? About something important, about something real?” (Montag, p. 52)

“Remember, the firemen are rarely necessary. The public stopped reading of its own accord.” (Faber, p.87)

“Give a man a few lines of verse and he thinks he’s the Lord of all Creation. You think you can walk on water with your books. Well, the world can get by just fine without them.” (Beatty, p. 118)

“Here we all are, Montag. Aristophanes and Mahatma Gandhi and Guatama Buddha and Confucious and Thomas Love Peacock and Thomas Jefferson and Mr. Lincoln, if you please. We are also Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.” (Granger, p. 151)

- In *Fahrenheit 451*, Professor Faber advocates the idea that people should think for themselves, not let the government or the television do their thinking for them. His argument suggests that books of all kinds are crucial to achieving this goal. Even though the content of books may cause discomfort to some readers, the freedom to read is necessary for any society that doesn’t wish to repeat the mistakes of the past (pp. 82-86).
- Captain Beatty, on the other hand, suggests that the government and education system have a responsibility to control and censor material that contains ideas that might cause discomfort to people (pp. 54-62).
- Mildred says, “Books aren’t people. You read and I look all around, but there isn’t anybody... Why should I read? What for?” (p. 73)

Answer Mildred’s question. **Why should we read books when information and entertainment of all sorts is so readily available from other media?** Write a response that will make Montag proud!

Consider the following:

- How is reading different than watching movies or surfing the Internet for education or entertainment? What does reading require of the reader that the others do not require?
- How does reading encourage people to think for themselves? Does reading foster individuality?
- Most people now (including you!) spend more time staring at their phones than they do reading. It seems like we all admit this is not a good thing for people individually or for the world at large, yet most of us still won’t make time to read. *Why?*
- Why did so many students not finish reading *Fahrenheit 451* before the test, even though they had more than three weeks to do so at an average pace of only six pages per day? More than half of ninth graders apparently could not spend 10-15 minutes per day reading, and most of them were not reading other material in place of the assigned novel. They. Just. Don’t. Read.



“You can’t ever have my books,” she said....

“The whole house is going up,” said Beatty.... “One. Two....”

“You can stop counting,” she said. She opened the fingers of one hand slightly and in the palm of the hand was a single slender object.

An ordinary kitchen match.

“Go on,” said the woman....

Beatty flicked his fingers to spark the kerosene.

He was too late. Montag gasped.

The woman on the porch reached out with contempt to them all and struck the match against the railing.