

FAHRENHEIT 451

by Ray Bradbury

An Adaptation via Thinking Processes Affording
Joy in Learning and Logical Analysis

an *auto*SOCRATIC QUICK-START publication

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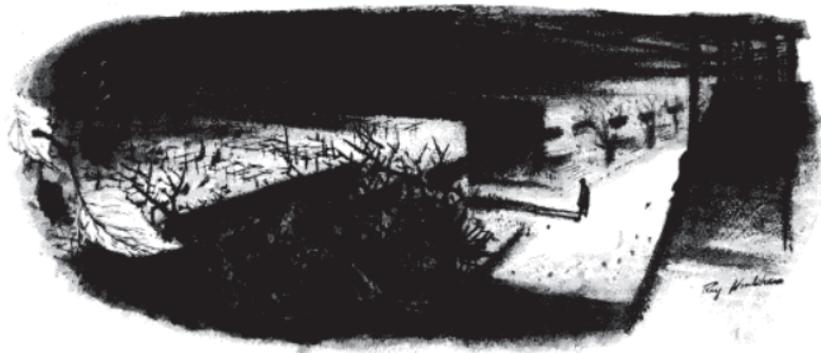
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An Introduction

There is a bit of background to “Fahrenheit 451”. Ray Bradbury was walking with a friend one night and was stopped by the police, merely for walking! The indignant Bradbury went home and wrote *The Pedestrian*, a short story about the incident. This served as the genesis for “Fahrenheit 451”.



Guy Montag

In a future world,
buildings are made
fireproof.

Firemen are still here.

There must be a job for
firemen to do.

People have decided
to outlaw books.

Guy Montag, as a
fireman, burns books.

The Mechanical Hound

Books are illegal.

The fireman burn the illegal books.

The person owning the books may try to escape.

A mechanical hound has the odors of every person on file.

The mechanical hound catches (and kills) violators of the law.

A Love for Life

People have turned to mundane radio and TV shows for entertainment.

People race from place to place, not taking time to "enjoy the little things".

Montag, being like others, lives a monotonous day-to-day life.

Montag meets Clarisse McClellan, a 17-year-old who questions everything.

Montag begins to think about things he never has before.

The House and the Book

About to burn books, one falls in Montag's hand and he glimpses only one line.

Montag is intrigued as another book falls into his hand.

Montag secretly stuffs the book into his jacket, intrigued.

The woman owning the books refuses to leave, and is burned to death.

Montag wonders what is in these books a person would die for.

*The History of Firemen
– and the Message of the
Book*

History of the Fireman

Montag wonders what is in these books a person would die for.

Fireman Captain Beatty knows Montag has a book and is "thinking".

Captain Beatty knows he better "head Montag off" from "thinking".

Montag is preparing to call in sick.

Beatty goes to Montag's home and tells him the truth about "book-burning".

A Changing World

The 19th century was a less populated, slower world.

Books were uncommon and communication slow.

Authors had to appeal to a very small group of people.

Appealing to a small group of people, an author must write well.

Books were high in quality.

A Fast-Paced Culture

The 20th century saw a huge rise in population.

Authors wanted to reach a huge, diverse population.

Books, etc., were watered down to a sort of pastepudding norm.

Pastepudding norms, sound-bites, and brief summaries don't promote learning.

Many people became less knowledgeable

Take these people back to the start ...

A Diverse Population

The 20th century saw a huge rise in population.

As population rises, there are more minority and special-interest groups.

There were more minority and special-interest groups.

Authors wanted to reach a huge, diverse population.

Books, etc., were watered down so as not to offend any particular group.

In Search of Happiness

Books, etc., were leveled down to a sort of pastepudding norm to reach more people.

Books, etc., were watered down so as not to offend any particular group.

Watered down books leave many unhappy, and not feeling leamed.

People want to be "happy".

Games and "contests about miscellaneous facts" dominated people's lives.

Democracy in Action

Watered down books
leave many unhappy,
and not feeling
learned.

Many other people,
however, wanted to
read good books.

Those who want to
read good books
became a threat to
those who did not.

"Books" was seen as
the source of the
threat.

People voted on
whether to outlaw
books or not.

Books to Ashes

People voted on whether to outlaw books or not.

Those loving books slowly became a minority - and were outvoted.

Books were outlawed.

With houses now fireproof, firemen did not have a job.

Firemen came to burn the books.

Back to the Story

Remembering Faber

A long time ago, Montag had seen an old man in the park, clutching a book.

The man, at first suspicious, gave Montag his card with the name: FABER.

Montag knows someone who loves books.

Montag wonders what is in these books a person would die for.

He contacts Faber.

A Failed Get-Back Plan

Montag wants to destroy all book-burning firemen.

Montag will plant books in their houses, and call in the alarm.

The fireman will be arrested.

Faber says firemen aren't the problem - the society who outlawed books is.

To change things requires one to change the culture.

Quality and Books

A good book has
QUALITY --
telling detail,
fresh detail. It
has great texture
of information.

To enjoy a good
book, you must
have **LEISURE** -
the time to think
- the time to
protest - the time
to digest!

To enjoy a good
book, we must
have the right to
carry out actions
based on what we
learn from the
interaction of the
first two.

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graph TD; A[A good book has QUALITY -- telling detail, fresh detail. It has great texture of information.] --- B(( )); B --- C[Books are good!]; D[To enjoy a good book, you must have LEISURE - the time to think - the time to protest - the time to digest!] --- B; E[To enjoy a good book, we must have the right to carry out actions based on what we learn from the interaction of the first two.] --- B;
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Books are good!

A Traveling Partner

Montag has a life to live and job to do.

Faber has lived too long in cowardice to go out and change things.

Faber cannot physically be at Montag's side.

Faber gives him a "hearing aid" so the two can communicate.

Montag goes back into the world, with Faber "in his ear".

The Women in the Parlor

Mildred (Montag's wife) and her friends chat idly about war, their crappy kids, etc.

Montag, now beginning to really think about things, is horrified.

Montag lashes out at his wife, Mildred, and the women.

Montag reads "Dover Beach" and the women start to cry.

Montag feels a slight victory, though Faber knows better, yelling "FOOL"!

Showdown with Beatty

Montag returns to work at the fire station, with Faber in his ear.

Beatty needles Montag with many literature quotes.

Faber tells Montag to be careful, as Beatty is tricky and knows something.

The alarm goes off and the salamander heads down the road to Montag's house!

Beatty has received the call - from Montag's wife, Mildred!

The Death of Beatty

Beatty demands Montag burn his own house - with a flamethrower.

Beatty strikes Montag, and discovers the earpiece.

Beatty promises to get the person at the other end of the earpiece

Montag is angered at Beatty, and horrified at him going after Faber.

Montag burns Beatty to death with the flamethrower.

Montag on the Run

After killing Beatty, Montag is on the run and gets to Faber's house.

Faber tells Montag of other "outcasts" who stay by the railroad tracks.

Montag needs to get to the railroad tracks.

The mechanical hound, which tracks by smell, is after him.

Montag drinks a lot of whiskey to throw the hound off his trail.

Meet Up

Recluses, old professors, etc., live by the railroad tracks.

Montag makes it to the railroad tracks.

Montag meets up with people like him.

Montag is worried he'll drag the Mechanical Hound to them.

Knowing the history of the police, the others are not worried.

"Montag" Sited!

The police have been airing the chase on TV, and need to kill Montag quick.

The police have tracked odd people who take late-night walks.

The police have picked out a man who the TV will say is Montag.

Cameras zoom in just enough to see a man, as the police yell "Hold it, Montag!"

The chase is over - and "Montag" is dead!

Burning and Saving Books

The people on the railroad tracks were fearful of being caught with books.

They learned how to memorize a book after reading it once.

The safest place to store a book was in a mind.

After memorized, the books were burned.

Books were passed down to generation, until the war was over.

The War

Throughout the book, there has been the quiet overtone of war.

"War" comes in an instant - and is over in an instant.

Everything - and everyone - Montag knew is destroyed and dead.

Montag and the survivors are like Phoenix, rising from the fire.

"Books", and what was in them, live to fight another day.

Great Quotes

“With school turning out more runners, jumpers, racers, tinkerers, grabbers, snatchers, fliers, and swimmers instead of examiners, critics, knowers, and imaginative creators, the word 'intellectual,' of course, became the swear word it deserved to be.”

“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?”

“There must be something in books, something we can't imagine, to make a woman stay in a burning house; there must be something there. You don't stay for nothing.”

“Don't ask for guarantees. And don't look to be saved in any one thing, person, machine, or library. Do your own bit of saving, and if you drown, at least die knowing you were heading for shore.”

“The magic is only in what books say, how they stitched the patches of the universe together into one garment for us.”

“A book is a loaded gun in the house next door...Who knows who might be the target of the well-read man?”

“I hate a Roman named Status Quo!” he said to me. “Stuff your eyes with wonder,” he said, “live as if you'd drop dead in ten seconds. See the world. It's more fantastic than any dream made or paid for in factories. Ask no guarantees, ask for no security, there never was such an animal. And if there were, it would be related to the great sloth which hangs upside down in a tree all day every day, sleeping its life away. To hell with that,” he said, “shake the tree and knock the great sloth down on his ass.”

“But you can't make people listen. They have to come round in their own time, wondering what happened and why the world blew up around them. It can't last.”

“You're a hopeless romantic,” said Faber. “It would be funny if it were not serious. It's not books you need, it's some of the things that once were in books. The same things could

be in the 'parlor families' today. The same infinite detail and awareness could be projected through the radios, and televisors, but are not. No, no it's not books at all you're looking for! Take it where you can find it, in old phonograph records, old motion pictures, and in old friends; look for it in nature and look for it in yourself. Books were only one type or receptacle where we stored a lot of things we were afraid we might forget. There is nothing magical in them at all. The magic is only in what books say, how they stitched the patches of the universe together into one garment for us. Of course you couldn't know this, of course you still can't understand what I mean when I say all this. You are intuitively right, that's what counts."

"I don't talk things, sir. I talk the meaning of things."

"Our civilization is flinging itself to pieces. Stand back from the centrifuge."

"If you don't want a man unhappy politically, don't give him two sides to a question to worry him; give him one. Better yet give him none. Let him forget there is such a thing as war. If the government is inefficient, topheavy, and tax-

mad, better it be all those than that people worry over it. Peace, Montag. Give the people contests they win by remembering the words to more popular songs or the names of state capitals or how much corn Iowa grew last year. Cram them full of noncombustible data, chock them so damned full of 'facts' they feel stuffed, but absolutely 'brilliant' with information. Then they'll feel they're thinking, they'll get a sense of motion without moving. And they'll be happy, because facts of that sort don't change.”

“That's the good part of dying; when you've nothing to lose, you run any risk you want.”

“Cram them full of non-combustible data, chock them so damned full of 'facts' they feel stuffed, but absolutely 'brilliant' with information. Then they'll feel they're thinking, they'll get a sense of motion without moving. And they'll be happy, because facts of that sort don't change. Don't give them any slippery stuff like philosophy or sociology to tie things up with. That way lies melancholy.”

“We must all be alike. Not everyone born free and equal, as the Constitution says, but everyone made equal. Each man

the image of every other; then all are happy, for there are no mountains to make them cower, to judge themselves against.”

“Oh God, the terrible tyranny of the majority.”

“Remember, the firemen are rarely necessary. The public itself stopped reading of its own accord.”

“With school turning out more runners, jumpers, racers, tinkerers, grabbers, snatchers, fliers and swimmers instead of examiners, critics, knowers and imaginative creators, the word 'intellectual' of course, became the swear word it deserved to be. You always dread the unfamiliar. Surely you remember the boy in your own school class who was exceptionally 'bright,' did most of the reciting and answering while the others sat like so many leaden idols, hating him. And wasn't it this bright boy you selected for beatings and tortures after hours? Of course it was. We must all be alike. Not everyone born free and equal, as the Constitution says, but everyone made equal. Each man the image of every other; then all are happy, for there are no mountains to make them cower, to judge themselves against. So! A book is a loaded gun in the house next door. Burn it. Take the shot from the

weapon. Breach man's mind. Who knows who might be the target of a well-read man? Me? I won't stomach them for a minute. And so when houses were finally fireproofed completely, all over the world [...] there was no longer need of firemen for the old purposes. They were given the new job, as custodians of our peace of mind, the focus of our understandable and rightful dread of being inferior: official censors, judges and executors.”

“Remember, Montag, we're the happiness boys. We stand against the small tide of those who want to make everyone unhappy with conflicting theory and thought.”

“And I thought about books. And for the first time I realized that a man was behind each one of the books. A man had to think them up. A man had to take a long time to put them down on paper. And I'd never even thought that thought before.”

“Good writers touch life often.”

“I don't want to change sides and just be told what to do. There's no reason to change if I do that.”

“If there were no war, if there was peace in the world, I'd say fine, have fun! But, Montag, you mustn't go back to being just a fireman. All isn't well with the world.”

“If you don't want a man unhappy politically, don't give him two sides of a question to worry him; give him one. Better yet, give him none. Let him forget that there is such a thing as war. If the government is inefficient, top-heavy, and tax-mad, better it be all those than that people worry over it.”

“If you read fast and read all, maybe some of the sand will stay in the sieve.”

“It's not books you need, it's some of the things that once were in books.”

The Message

“When did it all start, you ask, this job of ours, how did it come about, where, when? Well, I’d say it really got started around about a thing called the Civil War. Even though our rule book claims it was founded earlier. The fact is we didn’t get along well until photography came into its own. Then—motion pictures in the early twentieth century Radio. Television. Things began to have *mass*.”

“And because they had mass, they became simpler,” said Beatty. “Once, books appealed to a few people, here, there, everywhere. They could afford to be different. The world was roomy. But then the world got full of eyes and elbows and mouths. Double, triple, quadruple population. Films and radios, magazines, books leveled down to a sort of pastepudding norm, do you follow me?”

“I think so.”

Beatty peered at the smoke pattern he had put out on the air. “Picture it. Nineteenth-century man with his horses, dogs, carts, slow motion. Then, in the twentieth century, speed up your camera. Books cut shorter. Condensations. Digests. Tabloids. Everything boils down to the gag, the snap ending.”

“Snap ending,” Mildred nodded.

“Classics cut to fit 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. I exaggerate, of course. The dictionaries were for reference. But many were those whose sole knowledge of *Hamlet* (you know the title certainly, Montag; it is probably only a faint rumor of a title to you, Mrs. Montag) whose sole knowledge, as I say, of *Hamlet* was a one-page digest in a book that claimed: *now at last you can read all the classics; keep up with your neighbors*. Do you see? Out of the nursery into the college and back to the nursery; there’s your intellectual pattern for the past five centuries or more.”

“Speed up the film, Montag, quick. *Click, Pic, Look, Eye, Now, Flick, Here, There, Swift, Pace, Up, Down, In, Out, Why, How, Who, What, Where, Eh? Uhl Bang! Smack! Wallop, Bing, Bong, Boom!* Digest digests, digest-digest-digests. Politics? One column, two sentences, a headline! Then, in midair, all vanishes! Whirl man’s mind around about so fast under the pumping hands of publishers, exploiters, broadcasters that the centrifuge flings off all unnecessary, time-wasting thought!”

“School is shortened, discipline relaxed, philosophies, histories, languages dropped, English and spelling gradually gradually neglected, finally almost completely ignored. Life is immediate, the job counts, pleasure lies all about after work. Why learn anything save pressing buttons, pulling switches, fitting nuts and bolts?”

“The zipper displaces the button and a man lacks just that much time to think while dressing at dawn, a philosophical hour, and thus a melancholy hour.”

“Life becomes one big pratfall, Montag; everything bang, boff, and wow!”

“Empty the theaters save for clowns and furnish the rooms with glass walls and pretty colors running up and down the walls like confetti or blood or sherry or sauterne. You like baseball, don’t you, Montag?”

“Baseball’s a fine game.”

“You like bowling, don’t you, Montag?”

“Bowling, yes.”

“And golf?”

“Golf is a fine game.”

“Basketball?”

“A fine game.”

“Billiards, pool? Football?”

“Fine games, all of them.”

“More sports for everyone, group spirit, fun, and you don’t have to think,. eh? Organize and organize and superorganize super-super sports. More cartoons in books. More pictures. The mind drinks less and less. Impatience. Highways full of crowds going somewhere, somewhere, somewhere, nowhere. The gasoline refugee. Towns turn into motels, people in nomadic surges from place to place, following the moon tides, living tonight in the room where you slept this noon and I the night before.”

“Now let’s take up the minorities in our civilization, shall we? Bigger the population, the more minorities. Don’t step on the toes of the dog lovers, the cat lovers, doctors, lawyers, merchants, chiefs, Mormons, Baptists, Unitarians, second-generation Chinese, Swedes, Italians, Germans, Texans, Brooklynites, Irishmen, people from Oregon or Mexico. The people in this book, this play, this TV serial are not meant to represent any actual painters, cartographers, mechanics anywhere. The bigger your market, Montag, the less you handle controversy, remember that! All the minor minor minorities with their navels to be kept clean. Authors, full of evil thoughts, lock up your typewriters. They *did*. Magazines became a nice blend of vanilla tapioca. Books, so

the damned snobbish critics said, were dishwater. No *wonder* books stopped selling, the critics said. But the public, knowing what it wanted, spinning happily, let the comic books survive. And the three-dimensional sex magazines, of course. There you have it, Montag. It didn't come from the Government down. There was no dictum, no declaration, no censorship, to start with, no! Technology, mass exploitation, and minority pressure carried the trick, thank God. Today, thanks to them, you can stay happy all tht time, you are allowed to read comics, the good old confessions, or trade journals."

"Yes, but what about the firemen, then?" asked Montag.

"Ah," Beatty leaned forward in the faint mist of smoke from his pipe. "What more easily explained and natural? With school turning out more runners, jumpers, racers, tinkerers, grabbers, snatchers, fliers, and swimmers instead of examiners, critics, knowers, and imaginative creators, the word 'intellectual,' of course, became the swear word it deserved to be. You always dread the unfamiliar. Surely you remember the boy in your own school class who was exceptionally 'bright,' did most of the reciting and answering while the others sat like so many leaden idols, hating him. And wasn't it this bright boy you selected for beatings and

tortures after hours? Of course it was. We must all be alike. Not everyone born free and equal, as the Constitution says, but everyone *made* equal. Each man the image of every other; then all are happy, for there are no mountains to make them cower, to judge themselves against. So! A book is a loaded gun in the house next door. Burn it. Take the shot from the weapon. Breach man's mind. Who knows who might be the target of the well-read man? Me? I won't stomach them for a minute. And so when houses were finally fireproofed completely, all over the world (you were correct in your assumption the other night) there was no longer need of firemen for the old purposes. They were given the new job, as custodians of our peace of mind, the focus of our understandable and rightful dread of being inferior: official censors, judges, and executors. That's you, Montag, and that's me."

Beatty knocked his pipe into the palm of his pink hand, studied the ashes as if they were a symbol to be diagnosed, and searched for meaning. "You must understand that our civilization is so vast that we can't have our minorities upset and stirred. Ask yourself, What do we want in this country, above all? People want to be happy, isn't that right? Haven't you heard it all your life? I want to be happy, people say.

Well, aren't they? Don't we keep them moving, don't we give them fun? That's all we live for, isn't it? For pleasure, for titillation? And you must admit our culture provides plenty of these."

"Yes."

"Colored people don't like *Little Black Sambo*. Burn it. White people don't feel good about *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Burn it. Someone's written a book on tobacco and cancer of the lungs? The cigarette people are weeping? Burn the book. Serenity, Montag. Peace, Montag. Take your fight outside. Better yet, into the incinerator. Funerals are unhappy and pagan? Eliminate them, too. Five minutes after a person is dead he's on his way to the Big Flue, the Incinerators serviced by helicopters all over the country. Ten minutes after death a man's a speck of black dust. Let's not quibble over individuals with memoriums. Forget them. Burn all, burn everything. Fire is bright and fire is clean." The fireworks died in the parlor behind Mildred. She had stopped talking at the same time; a miraculous coincidence. Montag held his breath. "There was a girl next door," he said, slowly. "She's gone now, I think, dead. I can't even remember her face. But she was different. How-how did she *happen*?"

Beatty smiled. “Here or there, that’s bound to occur. Clarisse McClellan? We’ve a record on her family. We’ve watched them carefully. Heredity and environment are funny things. You can’t rid yourselves of all the odd ducks in just a few years. The home environment can undo a lot you try to do at school. That’s why we’ve lowered the kindergarten age year after year until now we’re almost snatching them from the cradle. We had some false alarms on the McClellans, when they lived in Chicago. Never found a book. Uncle had a mixed record; antisocial. The girl? She was a time bomb. The family had been feeding her subconscious, I’m sure, from what I saw of her school record. She didn’t want to know *how a* thing was done, but *why*. That can be embarrassing. You ask why to a lot of things and you wind up very unhappy indeed, if you keep at it. The poor girl’s better off dead.”

“Yes, dead.”

“Luckily, queer ones like her don’t happen often. We know how to nip most of them in the bud, early. You can’t build a house without nails and wood. If you don’t want a house built, hide the nails and wood. If you don’t want a man unhappy politically, don’t give him two sides to a question to worry him; give him one. Better yet, give him none. Let him forget there is such a thing as war. If the government is

inefficient, topheavy, and tax-mad, better it be all those than that people worry over it. Peace, Montag. Give the people contests they win by remembering the words to more popular songs or the names of state capitals or how much corn Iowa grew last year. Cram them full of noncombustible data, chock them so damned full of 'facts' they feel stuffed, but absolutely 'brilliant' with information. Then they'll feel they're thinking, they'll get a *sense of* motion without moving. And they'll be happy, because facts of that sort don't change. Don't give them any slippery stuff like philosophy or sociology to tie things up with. That way lies melancholy. Any man who can take a TV wall apart and put it back together again, and most men can, nowadays, is happier than any man who tries to slide-rule, measure, and equate the universe, which just won't be measured or equated without making man feel bestial and lonely. I know, I've tried it; to hell with it. So bring on your clubs and parties, your acrobats and magicians, your daredevils, jet cars, motorcycle helicopters, your sex and heroin, more of everything to do with automatic reflex. If the drama is bad, if the film says nothing, if the play is hollow, sting me with the theremin, loudly. I'll think I'm responding to the play, when it's only a

tactile reaction to vibration. But I don't care. I just like solid entertainment."

Beatty got up. "I must be going. Lecture's over. I hope I've clarified things. The important thing for you to remember, Montag, is we're the Happiness Boys, the Dixie Duo, you and I and the others. We stand against the small tide of those who want to make everyone unhappy with conflicting theory and thought. We have our fingers in the dike. Hold steady. Don't let the torrent of melancholy and drear philosophy drown our world. We depend on you. I don't think you realize how important you are, we are, to our happy world as it stands now"

