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## Fahrenheit 451: A Teacher's Guide

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## THE CARL AND WINIFRED LEE HONORS COLLEGE

### CERTIFICATE OF ORAL EXAMINATION

Jaclyn Shurmack, having been admitted to the Carl and Winifred Lee Honors College in Fall 2001 successfully presented the Lee Honors College Thesis on November 22, 2005.

The title of the paper is:

"Fahrenheit 451: A Teacher's Guide"

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading 'Jonathan Bush', written over a horizontal line.

Dr. Jonathan Bush, English

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading 'Karen J. Vocke', written over a horizontal line.

Dr. Karen Vocke, English

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading 'Patricia Bills', written over a horizontal line.

Ms. Patricia Bills, English

# Fahrenheit 451: A Teacher's Guide

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This website is a resource for teachers to reference in order to help them understand and teach various aspects of *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury. First, *Fahrenheit 451* is a great book to teach in the classroom. It presents many ideas that will cause students to think about the world around them. Some of these ideas include thinking on one's own and also questioning information that is presented to students. One aspect of Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* looks at the idea of censorship in the world. In this futuristic tale, books are burned rather than read and the censorship of various parts of life can be seen, including free thinking. Technology seems to have taken over and people no longer think about life, they just go along with the crowd and never question anything that occurs; people never ask 'Why?' I hope that after reading and discovering numerous aspects of this book with your students that they will see the world differently.

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This site presents teachers with information about the author, Ray Bradbury, including other works he has written and other forms of media he has been involved with. This site also introduces a **Cultural Studies** approach to looking at *Fahrenheit 451* with students. This approach includes exploring the ideas of censorship and conformity and relating those ideas to what we see in our own society today. This approach will help students connect this book to their own lives and hopefully they will have a better understanding of both the literature and how it affects or portrays their own world.

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The last section of this site is a **Teacher Resource** page that will provide teachers with related websites and books that may shed more light on the mind of Bradbury. Also, there are links to other sources on the internet found throughout this website to aid teachers further in the teaching of this book. I hope you find this site useful to your teaching of *Fahrenheit 451*.

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*All page numbers from Fahrenheit 451 listed on this site come from the 50th anniversary edition. Buy it here at Amazon*

# Fahrenheit 451: All About Ray

Home	Ray Bradbury has brought us many great works including novels, short stories, film, television and the list goes on. Ray Douglas Bradbury was born on August 22, 1920 in Waukegan, Illinois. During his childhood his family moved back and forth between Tucson, Arizona and Waukegan and finally ended up moving to Los Angeles in 1934. Bradbury began writing stories on butcher paper at the age of eleven.
All About Ray	
Cultural Studies	Bradbury attended Los Angeles high school and was part of the drama club. He had great plans to become an actor. During high school two of his teachers saw his talent for writing and encouraged him to keep writing. As high school continued on, Bradbury became more serious about writing.
Teacher Resources	
About Me	After graduating high school, Bradbury did not continue on with his education. He did not attend college but put most of his effort into writing and trying to get published. In 1938 Bradbury published his first work in <i>Imagination!</i> , a short story entitled "Hollerbach's Dilemma." In 1945 "The Big Black and White Game" was selected for Best American Short Stories.

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## PERSONAL LIFE

Writing was not all Bradbury did, he also had time for a social life. In 1946 he met his wife Maurgerite "Maggie" McClure. They married September 27, 1947 and had four children during their marriage: Susan born in 1949, Romona in 1951, Bettina in 1955, and Alexandra in 1958. The couple still resides in Los Angeles today.

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## MOST WELL KNOWN WORKS

Some of Bradbury's more famous works as the leading writer of science fiction include the *Martian Chronicles* published in 1950. *The Illustrated Man* published in 1951 and *Fahrenheit 451* published in 1953. In all, Bradbury has published over 30 books, 600 short stories, and has also written poems, essays, and plays.

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## FILM

At one point Bradbury worked in film writing the teleplay for "The Halloween Tree" and also had his own cable television show entitled *Ray Bradbury Theatre*. His television show brought 65 of his short stories to life for the public to see. Bradbury also wrote a few episodes for *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* and *The Twilight Zone*.

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## AWARDS

Over the years Bradbury has collected numerous awards for both writing and film. These awards include the O. Henry Memorial Award, the Benjamin Franklin Award (1954), the Aviation-Space Writer's Association Award for Best Space Article in an American Magazine (1967), the World Fantasy Award for Lifetime Achievement, and the Grand Master Award from the Science Fiction Writers of America. His work was also included in the Best American Short Stories collections for 1946, 1948 and 1952. Bradbury has also won an Emmy for his teleplay for "The Halloween Tree."

## LITERARY HISTORY TIMELINE

1938- "Hollerbach's Dilemma"

1939- *Futura Fantasia* -4 issues of a fan magazine Bradbury published himself

1941- "Pendulum"-Published in *Super Sci Stories* magazine

1942- "The Lake"

1942- *Dark Carnival*- collection of short stories

1945- "The Big Black and White Game"

1950- *The Martian Chronicles*

1951- *The Illustrated Man* (1969- Film version created)

1953- *Fahrenheit 451* (1967- Film version created)

1953- *The Beast From 20,000 Fathoms*-Film, inspired by "The Fog Horn" by .....Bradbury

1957- *Dandelion Wine*

1962- *Something Wicked This Way Comes* (1983- Film made based on this novel)

1963- *The Anthem Sprinters and Other Antics*- plays

1966- *The Day it Ruined Forever: A Comedy in one Act* - play

1969- *I Sing the Body Electric*

1973- *When Elephants Last in the Dooryard Bloomed* - poetry

1976- *Pillar of Fire and other Plays*

1979- *Twin Hieroglyphs that Swim the River Dust* - poetry

1979- *Martian Chronicles* television miniseries

1984- *Forever and the Earth*- radio

1986-1992- *Ray Bradbury Theater* on cable

1990- *The Day it Rained Forever*- musical

1993- *The Other Foot*

1997- *Driving Blind*

2002- *One More for the Road: A New Short Story Collection*

*For a more in depth listing of literary works and film, please visit these helpful sites.*

Bradbury has contributed so much to our world of literature. He has opened many minds and brought many new ideas to a multitude of people.

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# Fahrenheit 451: Cultural Studies

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*Why Cultural Studies?*

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While studying to become an English teacher, I often found myself asking, "Is literature really important? Is it really going to have that big of an impact on a student's life?" Basically, if students were to never read novels and poetry, would it really make a difference? I asked myself why I wanted to teach English.

The idea of a cultural studies approach to literature was introduced to me during my college years at Western Michigan University and helped to answer the doubts I had about the effect literature would have on my students' lives. *Literature and Lives* by Allen Carey-Webb gives a great explanation of the cultural studies idea and also includes a multitude of ideas to help teachers execute this approach in the classroom. To briefly describe this idea, I refer to Webb himself, who states:

"Cultural studies emphasizes the integration of literary works, even the most canonical, with the whole range of cultural expression. In the classroom, cultural studies calls for up-to-date and engaging thematic curriculums where culture, social structures, and historical circumstances are explored side by side with a particular emphasis on how those issues touch real people in the present day... Thus the cultural studies movement explores not only the high literary culture that has been the traditional domain of English teaching, but also the lives of people whose voices, perspectives, and experiences are seen as the very stuff of which culture is made" (Carey-Webb 8).

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A cultural studies approach helps students connect literature to their own lives making literature more meaningful and relevant.

I present to you a few cultural studies ideas that I have come across that relate to *Fahrenheit 451*.

Censorship

Conformity

Technology

War

I recommend purchasing Webb's book and using his ideas in the classroom.  
Carey-Webb, Allen. *Literature and Lives: A Response-Based, Cultural Studies Approach to Teaching English*. NCTE. Illinois: 2001.

#### OTHER CULTURAL STUDIES RESOURCES

To get a larger perspective on the cultural studies idea, here are a few other recommended reads. Many of these books include cultural studies ideas but also offer more information on effective teaching strategies related to English.

\*Bushman, John H. and Kay Parks Bushman. *Teaching English Creatively*. Second Ed. Illinois, Charles C Thomas, 1996.

\*Langer, Judith A. *Effective Literacy Instruction: Building Successful Reading and Writing Programs*. Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 2002.

\* Pirie, Bruce. *Reshaping High School English*. Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1997.

\*Ward, Stephen (ed.). *Education Studies: A Student's Guide*. New York: RoutledgeFalmer, 2004.

(Although entitled a student's guide, this book is useful for current teachers as well).

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# Fahrenheit 451: Cultural Studies

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## Censorship

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The idea of censorship can be seen all throughout *Fahrenheit 451*. Censorship is something that has been present throughout history in various forms. It seems as though we censor things that will offend others, including books, and in that censorship we ultimately keep people from learning about other cultures, beliefs, and ideas. Censorship in turn prevents mankind from thinking for themselves and making judgements on information presented to them.

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About Me

Here are a few ideas on bringing censorship into the classroom and relating it to *Fahrenheit 451*:

\*Webquest on Censorship: This webquest looks at censorship in the past and how it can be seen in *Fahrenheit 451*. It is a great way to incorporate technology and media into the classroom.

\*Have students bring in a favorite book, cd, magazine, etc. Have them write and discuss why they love this item so much. Proceed to inform students that they will no longer be able to use this item. It has been censored. Although a very mild version of censorship, it may help students connect with the idea of censorship on a personal level.

\*Have students look for present forms of censorship. Research and discuss these forms and how they impact society. Also, attempt to make connections of what *Fahrenheit 451* predicts will happen and what has actually happened so far in our world.

\*Look at the censored book list with your students. Have students look for books and/or authors they have read. Is it appropriate to ban? Why or why not? What is bad/good about this book? Do you think it belongs on this list? Discuss these questions as a class after students have had time to write their thoughts down on paper.

\*Related specifically to the book, have students reread Beatty's lecture of

why books have been banned (p21-02). Have them write and discuss how they feel about Beatty's thoughts regarding censorship. Beatty believes books are now burned because they have offended too many different groups of people.

\*Here are two quotes that might make good discussion starters:

"We are not afraid to entrust the American people with unpleasant facts, foreign ideas, alien philosophies, and competitive values. For a nation that is afraid to let its people judge the truth and falsehood in an open market is a nation that is afraid of its people." ~John F. Kennedy February 26, 1962

"It's not just the books underfire now that worry me. It is the books that will never be written. The books that will never be read. And all due to the fear of censorship. As always, young readers will be the real losers." ~Judy Blume

\*Websites that might bring more insight into censorship:

~Banned books and Censorship

~Most frequently banned books of the 1990's

~Censored

~First Amendment

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# Fahrenheit 451: Cultural Studies

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## Conformity

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Conformity is another aspect that can be seen throughout *Fahrenheit 451*. With the burning of books goes the freedom of thought. People begin following the crowd and give up thinking for themselves. It is easier for them to be told what is right and wrong rather than think about the consequences of not only their actions but the actions of their society. Having students explore conformity and its' effects may help them question the world around them.

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Here are some ideas to use in the classroom to help your students understand and realize the effects of conformity:

\*Looking at *The Holocaust* is one general way of helping connect conformity to students' lives. Discussing the reasoning people had for their actions might help students understand human response.

\*Create a writing assignment where students explore a time where *they* followed along blindly without questioning what was happening. This is a good way for students to learn about conformity. Students should try to look back at this incident and see how things may have turned out if they *had* spoken up or not participated in the act. The idea of peer pressure will most likely arise and may be a good prompt for those that have trouble getting started. An alternative to this idea could be having students discuss a time where they wish someone had spoken up for them. Have students discuss and share their thoughts with the class.

\* Use the book *The Wave*, by Todd Strasser. This book tells the story of an actual experiment a teacher performs in his class to see how people could have followed along so freely during The Holocaust. The experiment, called "The Wave" quickly spreads throughout the school and it is then announced that this is how Hitler got people to follow him.

\*Another experiment related to conformity is the Milgram experiment. This experiment was done in the 1960's to try to understand how officers could

have killed so many people during The Holocaust. This experiment shows that the use of authority caused "normal" citizens to inflict strangers with pain because they were told to do so. There is a video of this experiment available at most libraries. Discuss the concept behind this experiment to see how students would react if put in this situation. Have them watch the video and then discuss their thoughts on it.

\*Montag and Clarisse's first encounter shows how Montag does not question or even look at his own society. Have students reread this meeting (p5-10) and have them come up with their own thoughts on what they think the importance of this encounter is.

\*A discussion between Montag and Faber also brings up the idea of not speaking up (p81-82). Have students write and discuss their own thoughts about this section.

\*Other Resources that may help with this topic:

~Hitler's Unwanted Children

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## Technology

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Technology is a theme and idea that is clearly seen throughout Bradbury's entire book. The advancement of technology to greater lengths is something that is upon us at the present moment. We see technology in *Fahrenheit 451* go to the extreme. Technology seems to be taking over the lives of a few of the characters, especially Mildred. Having students take a closer look at technology in *Fahrenheit 451* may help them recognize our own obsession with technology.

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Here are a concepts to look at concerning technology along with classroom prompts that can be used to bring about discussion on relating technology in *Fahrenheit 451* to our present situation.

\* One specific and somewhat shocking instance of technology would be when Mildred has her stomach pumped after attempting suicide and she awakes with no knowledge of anything happening. "They had this machine. They had two machines really. One of them slid down into your stomach like a black cobra down an echoing well looking for all the old water and the old time gathered there...It had an Eye. The impersonal operator of the machine could, by wearing a special optical helmet, gaze into the soul of the person whom he was pumping out" (14).

Looking at this section and reading it at greater length than the quote named here, students could discuss the technology and its exact functions. Students could then go on to discuss the morals behind this machine. Is this good that someone can have their insides sucked out and changed without ever knowing about it? Will they ever learn a lesson or change?

\*Seashell radios are mentioned throughout this book and are mainly used by Mildred. She constantly has them in listening to someone talk to her. Mildred has even learned to lip read so she never has to take them out.

Have students discuss current models of the seashell and their thoughts about them. Do students obsess about their headphones and constantly

wear them? Is listening to music and "unplugging" oneself from the world (even for a short time) the same as Mildred's love of the thimble radios?

\*The Hound can be programmed with the scent of any living creature and will attack and kill this creature on command. Ask students to discuss any current practices that the United States uses that is similar to this one. The up-and-coming advancement of DNA testing might be a great topic for conversation. Ask students whether they believe everyone should have their DNA in a government data base. Does this affect one of our liberties? Is this ethical? What would be the benefits/drawbacks of this situation?

\*Television Walls are called "the family" by Mildred. She watches people on television all day and even begins to participate in the acting by receiving scripts and reciting lines when prompted. Whole walls are taken down and TV's are put in their place. Do we see an obsession with television in America? What products do we have that are similar to these tv walls? (Plasma televisions, Flat panel tv's that hang on the wall and blend in).

**Overall, do you see our society ending up like the society portrayed by Bradbury?**

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## War

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The onset of war is subtly mentioned throughout *Fahrenheit 451*. War is not a big concern of any of the citizens in this book. It is clear that war is something that is far off and unimportant to think about or discuss. War is declared and no one is concerned or even bats an eyelash. War, in other lands, is something that for many is not a big deal. We hear of war and think, "Oh, that is sad, but it doesn't affect me, it's not in my country." Most would not like to admit that they have these thoughts but many do. The United States has been referred to numerous times as "The World's Police." We get involved in so many different countries' affairs because we think we need to help. However, we also ignore many *other* countries that need our help. Many students do not know about incidents in other countries because we are an ethnocentric nation. Our media does not present problems in other countries unless it directly affects our trade, resources, or other aspects we may benefit from or be hindered by. Helping students see what goes on in foreign lands is beneficial in that it causes them to not only question what the media presents to them but to also realize that other people need our help. In *Fahrenheit 451* people do not concern themselves with events in their own country much less any other country.

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I present to you a few topics that some may not know about at the high school level that may be important for students to learn about. All of these ideas can be in some way linked to *Fahrenheit 451*.

~After The Holocaust, the world said we would never let another massacre of people occur, but maybe we only meant in Europe or the United States. In 1994 over 800,000 Tutsis were killed by the Hutus in Rwanda. Plans were put in motion to exterminate this race of people (the Tutsis). Rwanda asked for help from the United Nations and the United States giving information that a genocide *would* occur here. No help was sent. Most people of the United States had no idea that this genocide was occurring, but some did. As Americans, we did not help when we could have. It was said that with the help of the UN or the U.S. this whole genocide could have been prevented. The world turned a blind eye toward Rwanda and thousands

been preferred. The news covered a killing by a soldier, and many more were killed.

Here are some links about this massacre:

~Leave None to Tell the Story

~The Triumph of Evil

~Evidence of Inaction

~DVD entitled "What I've learned about U.S foreign policy: The War Against the Third World" This entire DVD presents information that was kept from the citizens of the United States related to the Third World including a section on Rwanda.

\**My Forbidden Face: Growing Up Under the Taliban: A Young Woman's Story* by Latifa This book tells the story of young woman in Kabul, Afghanistan when the Taliban invades. Even reading just the first chapter helps show students that someone can come in and take over a country very quickly. Personally, it frightened me a bit.

\*Taking a look at a discussion between Montag and Mildred (p73-74) helps to show the lack of concern for war and how the world has progressed to not caring about anything. This excerpt can be used to question students on what they think of the United States. Is this passage about the U.S.? Does it accurately portray our world? How do you feel about this?

\*Another passage reads, "War has been declared'...Montag stood trying to make himself feel the shock of the quiet statement from the radio, but nothing would happen" (p125). This passage shows how even when he tries, Montag cannot make himself be concerned with the war. Society has made him immune to the idea of war.

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# Fahrenheit 451: Teacher Resources

Home	This page is full of resources to help you learn more about Ray Bradbury and teacher resources related to him to help you understand and incorporate his books into your own classroom.
All About Ray	<p><i>WEBSITES</i></p> <p>*RayBradbury.com</p> <p>This is the official website of Ray Bradbury. It includes all the basic information about his life and what he has contributed to the world.</p> <p>*Ray Bradbury Online</p>
Cultural Studies	
Teacher Resources	
About Me	<p>This site is much more detailed than the official website. I found it to be much more useful and informative than many other sites out there.</p> <p>*Web English Teacher-Ray Bradbury</p> <p>Some links on this site are very useful, others are not. I recommend the section <i>Content Questions</i>. Although recommended for college students, some of the questions may work for high schoolers. We should not assume younger students cannot handle these questions. Use discretion when choosing what to bring into the classroom.</p> <p>*General Censorship Resources</p> <p>This site presents links to various other sites dealing with censorship in order to answer any questions you or your students may have about censorship.</p> <p>*Banned Books and Censorship</p> <p>This site also gives numerous links related to book banning and its history, and books that are currently challenged or banned.</p> <p>*Contemporary Themes in <i>Fahrenheit 451</i></p> <p>This site describes some of the themes in <i>Fahrenheit 451</i> and gives some lesson ideas to help students understand these themes. Themes include, censorship, entertainment, political correctness, and happiness.</p>

*PRINT RESOURCES ABOUT RAY*

\*Mogen, David. *Ray Bradbury*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1986

Although aged, this book is still useful. It goes into detail about Bradbury's writing style and his literary influences as well as discussing at length many of his less popular works. This might be useful if you plan on focusing on a Bradbury unit and want to include a variety of his works. Other chapters discuss themes within Bradbury's work including entering the space frontier and technology. Mogen also includes information at length about how many of Bradbury's stories relate to or reflect his (Bradbury's) own life.

\*Reid, Robin Anne. *Ray Bradbury: A Critical Companion*. Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2000.

This is a great book for teachers. Reid gives the Life of Ray Bradbury and also goes into an in-depth discussion on whether or not Bradbury is a science fiction writer. Bradbury gives his own comments on this label of science fiction and at one point "discusses the problem of 'science fiction' as a marketing label" (8). The remaining eight chapters go into detail discussing his various books. Each chapter is dedicated to a book, some of which have been discussed on this site already. Such discussions include, character and plot development, point of view, setting, and themes.

\*Weist, Jerry. *Bradbury: An Illustrated Life: A Journey to Far Metaphor*. New York: Harper Collins, 2002.

Amazing. This book includes photos, along with commentary, of most of Bradbury's work. The introduction is written by Bradbury himself who gives an insight into what is behind many of his works. The photos, which are large and easy to see, cover early work published in magazines, and comic books through his hard covers and paperbacks. There are also pictures of authors (and their works) who have influenced him, theater, radio and television work and some of Bradbury's own art. This is not strictly a photo album of Bradbury's life. It also includes great writing about Bradbury and all he has contributed to the world of literature, film, television, etc.

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# Fahrenheit 451: About Me

Home	My name is Jaclyn Shurmack and I am currently a senior at Western Michigan University studying Secondary Education majoring in English and minoring in Communications. I am graduating in December 2005 and hope to begin teaching right away.
All About Ray	
Cultural Studies	This website is a thesis project for the Lee Honors College at WMU. I had the freedom to choose any topic I desired and could present my information in any form. I chose a website because, as we all are discovering, this is the information age and <i>everything</i> is on the web. I thought that by presenting a cultural studies approach to <i>Fahrenheit 451</i> , teachers might be able to get students to connect to this book, and hopefully other books using this approach, on a deeper level. Providing this information on the web makes it available to so many more people than a paper that will be left in a file unread for the next twenty years.
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I hope that this information has helped at least one person out there in the teaching of literature in the classroom.

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