

FAHRENHEIT 451

by Ray Bradbury

Analysis the story
made by Kseniia Antiufeeva

The Author

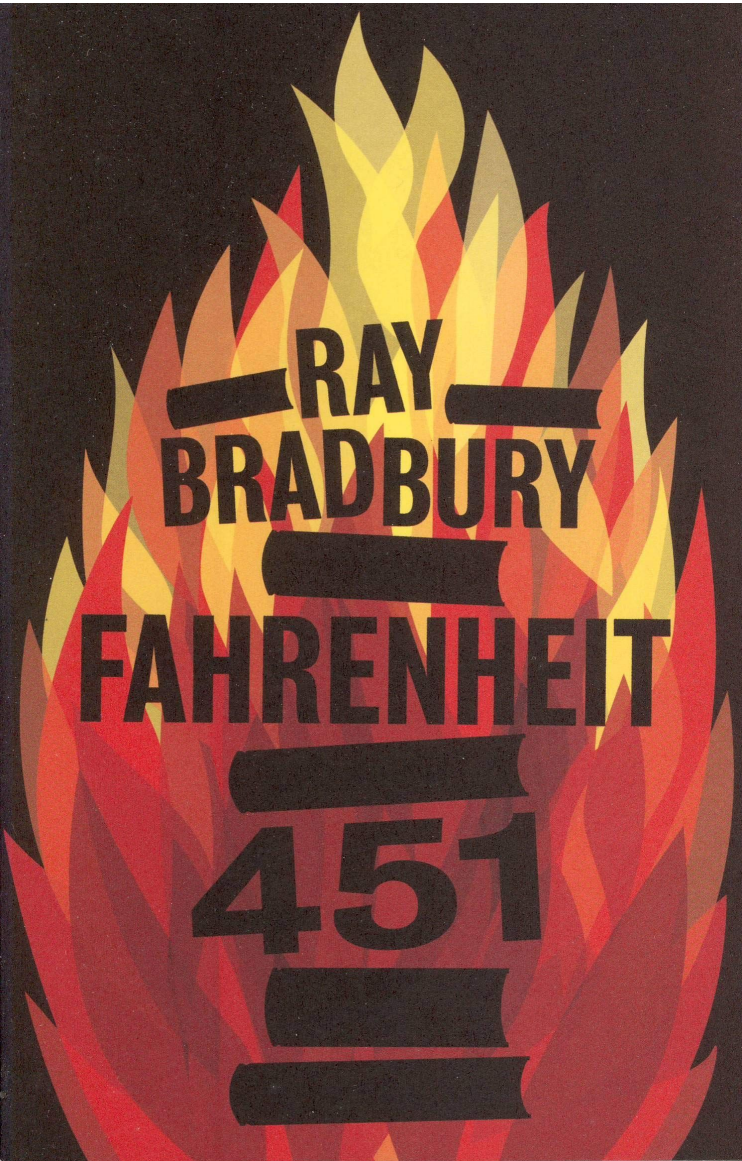


- The author of this literary work is Ray Douglas Bradbury, who was an American science fiction writer whose works were translated in more than 40 languages and sold millions of copies around the world.
- He was born on August 22, 1920, in Waukegan, Illinois. His father was a telephone lineman, his mother, was a Swedish immigrant. In 1934 his family settled in Los Angeles, California. He attended Los Angeles High School, where he was involved in the drama club and planned to become an actor. He graduated from high school in 1938 and had no more formal education. Instead, he learned from reading works of such writers as Lev Tolstoy and Fyodor Dostoevsky, among others.



- In 1941 he became a paid writer when the magazine Science Stories published his short story, titled "Pendulum", and he was a full-time writer by the end of 1942. His first book - "Dark Carnival" - was a collection of stories published in 1947. The same year he married Marguerite McClure, whom he met at a book store a year earlier. They had four daughters and, eventually, eight grandchildren.
- Ray Bradbury shot to international fame after publication of "The Martian Chronicles" (1950). His total literary output is close to 600 short stories, more than 30 books and numerous poems and plays. Stylistically, Bradbury favored a very imagery intensive, highly descriptive style of prose, rich with metaphor and poetic language.
- In 2004 Bradbury received a National Medal of Arts. He was given a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. An asteroid was named in his honor, "9766 Bradbury", and the Apollo astronaut named a crater on the moon "Dandelion Crater", after his novel, "Dandelion Wine". He also received the World Fantasy Award for Lifetime Achievement, the Grand Master Award from Science Fiction Writers of America, an Emmy Award for his work as a writer on "The Halloween Tree", and many other awards and honors. Ray Bradbury died on June 6, 2012, at the age of 91, in Los Angeles, California.

The Title



- I consider the title of the story to be rather unsuggestive and metaphoric, because only after reading the book's tagline: "Fahrenheit 451 – the temperature at which book paper catches fire, and burns", we begin to guess that the story will be connected possibly with the activities of firefighters.
- The title of the novel, Fahrenheit 451, was chosen because paper ignites spontaneously at this temperature. In fact, paper ignites spontaneously at just over 450 degrees Celsius. According to Bradbury, the mistake was caused by the fact that he consulted with a specialist from the fire department, who confused the temperature scales.

The Setting

The author describes events that take place somewhere in the USA in the near or distant future, because he uses American words such as pants, store, gas, closet, subway, etc. and neologisms: Seashells ear-thimbles and phono-colour walls.



The Subject



- The subject of this novel may be formulated as the clash between freedom of thought and censorship, the consequences of censorship and mass control for a society that lost the ability to think and analyze what is happening. The following row of thematic vocabulary helps us to gain a better understanding of the topic: censor, retaliation, control, asylum, radical, constitution, awe.

The Message



Bradbury's main message may be formulated as follows: a society that wants to survive, thrive, and bring people fulfillment must encourage them to wrestle with ideas. He indicts a society that puts all its emphasis on providing people with a superficial sense of happiness. To my mind, the story teaches us not to act the same, behave the same, and think the same. To sum up, the moral is reflected in the quote of Jean-Jacques Rousseau: «Strength and freedom make a person glorious. Weakness and bondage have never created anything instead of evil».



The Plot

- In my opinion, the plot of the story is not rather complicated or tangled up. The charm of the story lies in its interesting plot and unexpected situations, which happen to the main character. The plot structure of the story is closed, since all the necessary elements: the exposition, the story, the climax and the denouement are presented in it. The story has a skillfully developed plot full of thoughts.

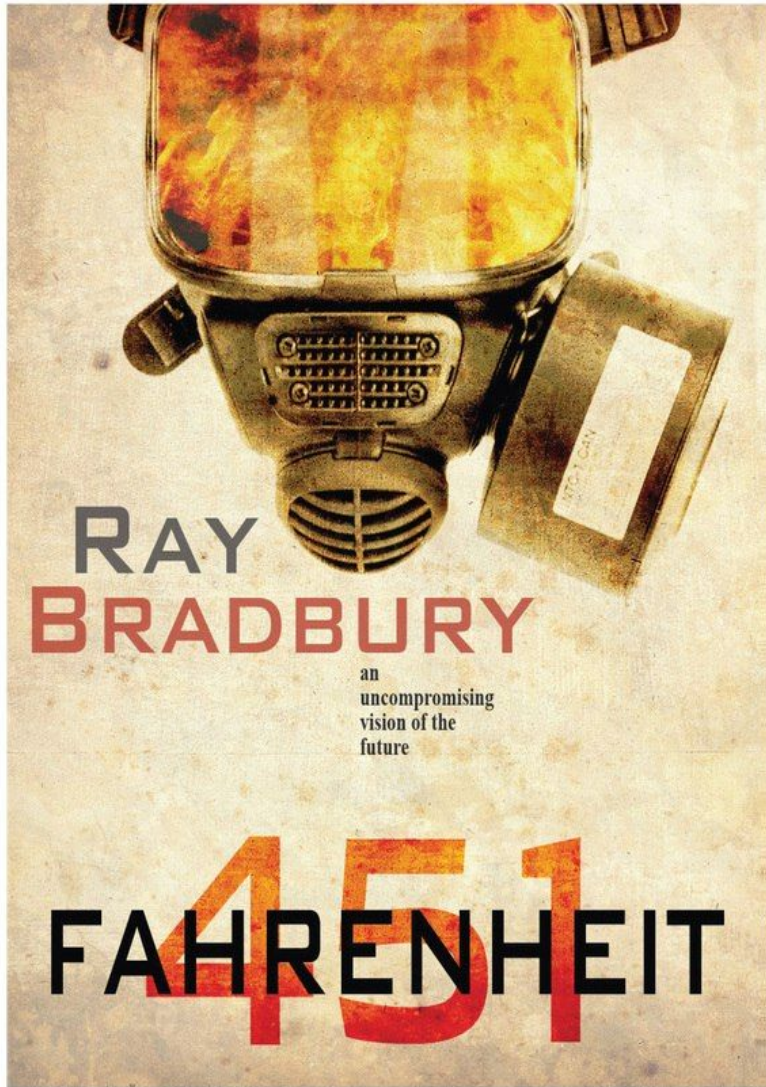


- The exposition takes place traditionally at the beginning of the story, where the author grabs our attention from the very first line. the author introduces the reader to a version of the modern world in which there is no place for books. Any printed publications are prohibited and subject to burning. This is done by specially trained people, firemen, to whom the protagonist of the novel Guy Montag belongs.
- Later the narration gains momentum. Montag meets Clarisse McClellan, who opens his eyes to the true state of affairs. For the first time in years, Montag realizes that human communication is more than just the exchange of memorized lines. Clarisse's question: "Are you happy?" forces Montag to take a fresh look at the life he leads. Pretty soon he concludes that, of course, this thoughtless existence cannot be called «happy». Fleeting meetings with Clarisse lead to the fact that Montag turns from a well-oiled machine gun into a person who confuses his fellow firefighters with inappropriate questions and remarks, like: " Didn't firemen prevent fires rather than stoke them up and get them going?"



- The climax of the story is rather vivid. Firemen go to routine call, shocking Montag to the core. A mistress of the house, accused of keeping forbidden literature, refuses to leave the doomed home and accepts death in the fire with her books. The passage is rich with such emotionally-coloured words, as, for example, roar, irritation, fervor, fiery, wild, devotion, insanity, mindlessness, curiosity, trembling. The author uses a large number of exclamation sentences to show the emotional tension that the protagonist feels (Look here! Innocent! Look!). Montag steals a book from a house to be burned and tries to find support from his wife, but it ends in failure.
- The denouement is quite predictable, because it becomes obvious that after Captain's Betty visit and a conversation with his wife, he feels completely disappointed in his surroundings and concludes that it is necessary to look for those who are called «rebels».

The Composition



- The story is told in the third person narration. It is precisely the form that allows the author to introduce the reader into the inner world of the character without any restrictions and show it in detail, so for the author there are no secrets in the soul of the character. The compositional structure of the novel is based on the principle of antithesis (light and darkness, bustle and serenity, noise and silence). The composition of the literary work is level (or straight line), because all the elements are given in their logical and chronological sequence. Narrative forms, used in the story, are the following: the exposition, the narration, the description and the dialogue.



Guy Montag

The **protagonist** is a 30 years old fireman, Guy Montag, this character is many-sided and complex. Montag revels in his work and he is a respected member of society because of it. The famous opening line of the novel, "It was a pleasure to burn," is written from Montag's perspective. However, we see how he changes after meeting [Clarisse McClellan](#), he begins to face his growing dissatisfaction with his life, his job, his marriage, the pleasure-seeking, and unthinking culture in which he lives, that is why I can say that the character is portrayed dynamically. Unlike the rest of his society, Montag is uneasy with the mindless entertainment that has replaced books. Television, violence – all the pursuits that occupy others don't seem amusing for Montag, who longs for something more meaningful. As he tells Mildred, "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?". The author does not pay attention to the Montag's appearance, because the main thing is man's inner world.



Captain Beatty

- Captain Beatty is the ruthless **antagonist** of the novel. The author depicts him complex and conflicted, creating a discerning and well-educated manipulator. Like the Mechanical Hound, he noses out information, such as the pattern of Montag's relationship with Clarisse, and the presence of books in Montag's house. He was once a rebel who read and learned in defiance of society, but knowledge brought him fear and doubt. He sought answers—the sort of simple answers that could guide him to the right decisions—and instead he found questions, which led in turn to more questions. He began to feel despair and helplessness, and ultimately decided that he was wrong to seek knowledge in the first place.



Mildred Montag

- Mildred is Guy's wife. The author shows her superficial, Mildred has no ambitions beyond watching television and listening to her 'Seashell ear-thimbles'. The character is not portrayed dynamically, and there are no changes in her thoughts or behavior, so Mildred is a hollow person—she doesn't seem to have a real connection to anyone.



Clarisse McClellan

- Clarisse McClellan is a 17 years old lover of life and nature. The author uses the direct characterization to show her complex figure. Not yet broken by society, Clarisse still has a youthful curiosity about everything around her, demonstrated by her constant questioning of Guy—questioning that spurs his identity crisis. Clarisse disappears from the story very early on, but her impact is large. The memory of Clarisse helps him organize his anger into opposition against the society that he serves.



- The old unnamed woman is a minor character, the author does not say much about her. Her role is episodic, but very important, on her example, the author shows those who are ready to follow their ideas until the very end.

The Conflict

- We may observe the internal Montag's conflict (Montag's struggle with himself and with his perception of the world). There are external conflicts: Man against Society (Guy Montag is in conflict with society by reading books instead of burning them), Man against Values (Montag does not accept the values imposed on him by society and government, Man against Technology (Technology dominates society, it leads to loss of humanity and turning people into mindless consumers). These conflicts contribute to an accurate and complete realization of the author's message.

The Vocabulary

- The story is full of emotionally-coloured words, which show the author's knowledge for a deep psychological analysis of his characters: complain, dread, awe, restlessly, plead, dismay, accuse, yell, aggravating, whimper, etc.
- There are some international words: captain, alcohol, radio, tobacco, university, sport, police, etc.
- I've found such phrasal verbs, as: rub off, spring up, shin up, put up with sb/sth, come up, come back, get into, go ahead, etc.
- There is a vulgar expression: "Heck," she said.
- I discovered such synonyms, as uneasily-restlessly, serenity-calm, think-suppose, odd-strange, animal-beast and antonyms: hotness-coldness, softness-hardness, noise-silence, etc.
- I'd also like to mention the proper names Guy Montag, Mildred Montag, Beatty, Faber, Clarisse McClellan.

The Stylistic Devices

- The author uses an anaphora to show Montag's confusion (One, Clarisse. Two, Mildred. One, Mildred, two, Clarisse) and generally emotionally affect the reader and emphasize concern and anxiety (They had this machine. They had two machines, really. Did it drink of the darkness? Did it suck out all the poisons accumulated with the years?).
- Bradbury uses a large number of similes, for example, to describe Clarisse's face and demeanor (She had a very thin face like the dial of a small clock; she was like the eager watcher of a marionette show), Montag (He felt his smile slide away, melt, fold over, and down on itself... like the stuff of a fantastic candle burning too long; he wore his happiness like a mask), etc.
- Bradbury also uses metaphors to describe characters of the novel, for instance, when he describes Clarisse (Her face...was fragile milk crystal), when Montag hears Captain Beatty's voice in his head (Light the first page, light the second page. Each becomes a black butterfly - Bradbury is metaphorically comparing the burning pages of a book to black butterflies).
- Inversion helps the author to emphasize necessary words, transferring his attitude to characters or events (How like a mirror, too, her face – about Clarisse)

Quotes

He was not happy. He was not happy. He said the words to himself. He recognized this as the true state of affairs. He wore his happiness like a mask and the girl had run off across the lawn with the mask and there was no way of going to knock on her door and ask for it back.

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.

Everyone must leave something behind when he dies . . .
Something your hand touched some way so your soul has somewhere to go when you die . . . It doesn't matter what you do, so long as you change something from the way it was before you touched it into something that's like you after you take your hands away.

- Awe (a feeling of reverential respect mixed with fear or wonder)
- Aggravating (causing annoyance)
- Mix (communicate well with other people)
- Asylum (a hospital for people with mental illnesses)
- Devotion (loyalty and love or care for someone or something)
- Abyss (a very deep hole that seems to have no bottom)
- Neglect (not to give enough care or attention to people or things that are your responsibility)
- Dread (to feel extremely worried or frightened about something that is going to happen or that might happen)
- Serenity (the quality of being peaceful and calm)
- Feign (to pretend to have a particular feeling, problem)

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- To sum up, the novel is written in a fantasy genre that presents us with the world of the near future. In his Dystopia, Bradbury exposes the negative tendencies of certain spheres of society and the state, as well as the vices of society, showing an exaggerated picture of the future to which this state of affairs will lead. I found the story thought-provoking and I would say this kind of novels would generally appeal to such people who are fond of Dystopias and worried about the problems of society.