

FAHRENHEIT 451 CHEAT SHEET

Link- [PDF Version of F451](#)

Big ideas

- *Fahrenheit 451* is science fiction. It does not have to be realistic at all points.
- This book is a warning. It was written soon after WWII and during the "Communist Scare." Bradbury believed governments could control people by controlling the media and censoring books.
- Each character represents a larger societal group: the government, the rebels, and the brainwashed citizens.
- Symbolism plays a significant role in this book. Please keep track of them.

Your teacher wants you to know...

- The accuracy of the predictions is impressive, primarily since the book was published in 1953.
- The symbols are a big deal.
- The allusions (references to historical events or literature).
- This is a dystopian society. Although not a mirror image of our society, there are countless similarities.
- Reading this book should open your eyes to issues around censorship and help you better understand the importance of reading certain books (even if they're boring as heck).
- Clarisse is only in the novel for a short time, but she's essential. Beatty is so much fun to discuss because he's so complex.

Themes

- Individualism v. Conformity: Our freedom is lost when we stop questioning society's rules and expectations.
- Dangers of technology: Here's a shocker- technology often pulls people apart and distracts them from reality.
- Censorship: More effective than destroying books is destroying people's desire to read them.

SYMBOLS AND MOTIFS

THE PHOENIX

The phoenix is a mythological that cannot be destroyed. Often they rise from the ashes after a tragedy. You can apply the phoenix to Montag and his rebirth after abandoning his job.

FIRE

Fire represents destruction but also an opportunity for rebirth. This symbol works closely with the phoenix.

SIEVE & SAND

Think of a sieve as a spaghetti strainer. Now imagine what happens if you pour sand into it. This is how Montag feels as he reads more books. No matter how hard he tries, the information slips from his mind.

THE SEASHELL AND WALLS

Both of these represent how technology separates people from each other and reality.

A few allusions

- **Biblical Allusion: Tower of Babel:** according to this myth described in the Bible (cf. Genesis, 11:6-8), God created various languages to stop humankind from literally reaching him.
- **Literary Allusion: Little Black Sambo/Uncle Tom's Cabin:** Harriet Beecher-Stowe published a novel titled Uncle Tom's Cabin (1852), in which she severely criticized slavery. Sambo is a character in Uncle Tom's Cabin. The name was used as a racial insult.
- **Shakespearean Allusion: Julius Caesar:** Roman emperor; "Remember Caesar, thou art mortal": An allusion to William Shakespeare's play, Julius Caesar.

You're probably confused about...

Part 1

The "snake" the paramedics shove down Mildred's throat. Yeah, this is weird at first. The snake is just a way of describing the tube the insert into her stomach to pump out the sleeping pills Mildred overdosed on.

Part 2

"Denham's Dentrifrice" is just a toothpaste. Essentially, Montag has the advertising jingle stuck in his head while he is trying to learn. This is probably Bradbury making a point about marketing and it's impact on our lives.

Part 3

Where is Montag? At the end of the novel, Montag finds a group of men on the outskirts of the city- which has just been destroyed. What happens next? We're not sure but hopefully the new men help raise a new society from the ashes (phoenix symbol).

Notable quotes

"Her face, turned to him now, was fragile milk crystal with a soft and constant light in it. It was not the hysterical light of electricity but— what? But the strangely comfortable and rare and gently flattering light of the candle."
~ Clarisse McClellan (Characters: Guy Montag as the narrator) (5)

"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. Three things are missing."
~Faber (96)

"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. Shake the tree and knock the great sloth down on his ass."
~Grainger (173)

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