

# Fahrenheit assignment



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Fire is at the core of all life. It provides warmth, power, the ability to cook and preserve food, and even through its destructiveness, it creates new life as in forest fires. However, at the hands of people who are bent on destruction, fire becomes a powerful weapon. To some people fire symbolizes destruction or renewal, but depending on how you look at it fire can symbolize both. In Ray Bursary's novel Fahrenheit 451, fire is both a symbol of destruction and renewal. Even as Montag changes his understanding of fire so does the symbolism that represents it.

Montage's perspective of fire changes dramatically throughout the book. In the beginning of the book Montag enjoys burning. He describes the kerosene as a sort of perfume. He sees fire as destructive, but believes that fire is also good and a solution to society's problems; which are books. This is shown in the first few sentences of the novel. "It was a pleasure to burn. It was a special pleasure to see things eaten, to see things blackened and changed." (pg. 3) This was Montage's perspective on life before he met Clarice. When Montag met Clarice his perspective on life, his world, and fire began to change.

Montage began to wonder about fire and the importance of burning books. This happened when Clarice said, "Strange. I heard once that a long time ago houses used to burn by accident and they needed firemen to stop the flames." (pg. 8) This made Montage truly begin to wonder and question Beatty and his own motives for burning books as well as the homes of those who own them. He wondered what fire used to be used for if people prevented fires in the past. Not only did he wonder this he also wondered why someone would risk their lives for books.

Montage's perspective on fire continued to change when he encounters the old woman who burned herself with her books in her own house. He became disgusted with burning and even vomited at the smell of kerosene. This is also when Montage began to wonder about books and what they held that was so important that would drive someone to kill themselves over. This is shown when Montage says, "You weren't there, you didn't see," he said. "There must be something in the books, things we can't imagine, to make a woman stay in a burning house; there must be something there.

You don't stay for nothing." (pg. 51) After this Montage wonders how he can keep doing his job burning books and homes. Near the end of the book when Montage gets called on a fire he wonders how he can keep burning. When he realizes his new assignment has led him to his own house his view of fire changes from destruction into cleansing and renewal. Montage just wanted to get rid of his old life and the memories of it so like Beauty once had said fire can be used for cleansing as mentioned a little in this quote from the book, "Burn all, burn everything.

Fire is right and fire is clean." (pg. 60) This is ironic because Beauty is one of Montage's problems in his past so he follows Beauty's advice and burns himself. Then when Montage experiences fire again he realizes the true meaning of it. At the end of the book when Montage escapes the city the true meaning of fire is shown in him when he meets the men in the forest he thinks of fire as warming not burning as shown in this quote, "The small motions, the white and red color, a strange fire because it meant a life happens. Montage experiences renewal in his life.

The phoenix is another thing that homebodies both renewal but it can also symbolize destruction as well. When Granger mentions the phoenix, a bird of fire, in the end of the book it symbolizes renewal, destruction, and rebirth. Granger compares mankind to the phoenix when he said, " But every time he burnt himself up he sprang out of the ashes, he got himself born all over again. And it looks like we're doing the same thing... "(p. 163) Granger believes that mankind has the ability to learn from their mistakes unlike the phoenix. Throughout this novel, fire is both a symbol of destruction and renewal. Even as

Montage changes his understanding of fire so does the symbolism that represents it. Montages many interactions with individuals who think freely such as Faber and Clarice led Montage to consider fire in a different way. He used fire to destroy his old life, which led Montage to his own personal rebirth that is represented by the phoenix, because of this fire is a very important and powerful symbol in Fahrenheit 451. As in all things, fire itself isn't the destructive force here but mankind who mistreats it. Through the lesson Montage learns, so do we have lessons to learn about our own destructive nature.