

Fahrenheit 451: dangers of technology

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



The novel, Fahrenheit 451 reflects Ray Bradbury's concern for decline of individual thought among his society. According to Captain Beatty, the head of the fire station "technology, mass exploitation, and minority pressure carried the trick" of replacing independent thought with conformity and finally leading to censorship (Bradbury, 58). Bradbury wants readers to notice these potential hazards in his fictional world and to beware of them in their own society. Technology in Fahrenheit 451 and today is seen as a great threat to individual thought.

Even though the society that Bradbury depicts in the novel is very extreme, it warns the reader of the dangers of technology. Mildred, Montag's wife is taken over by the media and escapes from her life through the modern technologies. According to Clarisse, people no longer think or talk about anything important, "No, not anything. They name a lot of cars or swimming pools mostly and say how swell. But they all say the same things and nobody says anything different from anyone else" (Bradbury, 31).

Similarly today many have turned into mindless human beings by sitting in front of the television or computer. The fast cars, loud music, advertisements and other forms of technological advances have created a lifestyle with too much stimulation in which no one has the time to think. (<http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/451/themes.html>) For example, Beatty explains that when zippers replace buttons "a man lacks just that much time to think while dressing at dawn" (Bradbury, 57) In Fahrenheit 451 minority pressure plays an important role in the decline of individual thought. This issue is still relevant today.

For instance various pressure groups' campaigns against sex and violence on television or hard rock music have great influence on the types of programs and music people watch and listen to. Beatty explains to Montag that in the past pressure groups were influential in ending free expression, which eventually allowed the government to begin censoring its citizen. " Bigger the population, the more minorities. Don't step on the toes of the dog lovers, cat lovers, doctors, lawyers, merchants, chiefs, Mormons, Baptists, Unitarians, second-generation Chinese, Swedes, Italians, Germans, Texans... (Bradbury, 57). Despite the obvious role of minority pressure in the decline of thought, the novel suggests mass exploitation to be the more serious problem.

While minority pressure comes from a few members of the public, exploitation comes from the majority of the population. " Publishers, exploiters, broadcasters" sense the public's desire for relaxation and pleasure and exploit mindless types of entertainment for profit (<http://ipl.ulis.ac.jp:8001/cgi-bin/ref/litcrit/litcrit.out.pl?ti=fah-198>). This suggests that even more dangerous than the pressure groups is the public's desire for comfort and pleasure. Beatty's discussion of minority pressure is very explicit and clear however, his discussion of mass exploitation is more implicit and is scattered through ten pages. Mass exploitation speeds up the decline of thought even more directly than minority pressure.

While pressure groups may manipulate people to avoid gaining knowledge, entertainment provides an alternative to any difficult thought (<http://www.pinkmonkey.com/booknotes/monkeynotes.com>) The types of entertainment

exploited in Fahrenheit 451 are only produced for the public's relaxation and pleasure. The simplification of intellectual challenges and use of drugs are the most basic kinds of exploitation in the novel, which are still common in today's society. Beatty explains that intellectually challenging works were made easier so that they would appeal to a larger audience. This is similar to the way Hollywood producers have produced many simplified motion pictures of famous pieces of literature.

Films like Romeo and Juliet and Gone with the Wind are more appealing to the new generation than reading the work itself. Another type of thought destroying mass exploitation in Fahrenheit 451 as well as the real world is the common drug use. When Mildred overdoses by taking too much sleeping pills, the medics, who replace her blood, tell Montag, "We get these cases nine or ten a night. Got so many, starting a few years ago, we had the special machines built" (Bradbury, 15), which suggests that use of drugs is common. It is obvious to see that Bradbury recognizes drugs as a threat to individual thought.

Montag smokes early on in the novel (Bradbury, 24), but as he becomes wiser his habit disappears, which shows that smoking was partially responsible for his ignorance in the beginning. Fahrenheit 451 demonstrates the author's extreme sensitivity to any attempts of restricting freedom of expression. He uses a dystopian setting to warn people of the dangers of technology, mass exploitation, and minority pressure and considers them as threats to individual thought. Moreover, Fahrenheit 451 is an excellent social critique novel, which contributes to positive changes in society.