

Fahrenheit 451 essay narrative essay

[Business](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Firemen start fires to burn houses. Firemen snuff out the history contained in countless books written by timeless authors; Darwin. Einstein, Gandhi. Confucius. Jefferson.

They incinerate the books that will take away peoples' happiness, and ensure that people live a blissfully ignorant life. They burn the books that will allow and force people to think. The fire gorges on pages upon pages of history, urged by the firemen to destroy the books filled with nonsense. This is what a fireman does. This is what Guy Montag does in Ray Bradbury's Fahrenheit 451. Proudly worn on every fireman's uniform is the Phoenix, a bird known for its tendency to burn itself up every few hundred years, and then be reborn from the very thing that destroyed it.

Fire. The Phoenix's fate is intertwined with fire, just as Montag's is intertwined with them both. Throughout the book, the fire and the Phoenix are Montag's sources of happiness, the only things he feels "happy" about in his life. The badges of the fireman are the Salamander and the Phoenix. Clarisse notices this on the first night she meets Montag and seems "hypnotized by the salamander on his arm and the Phoenix disc on his chest" (6).

As a symbol of the fireman, the Phoenix comes to represent burning, destruction, and darkness. Montag loves his job though, thinking that "it was a pleasure to burn" (3). Though the Phoenix is a source of despair for some people, it is Montag's source of happiness. That is, until Clarisse comes along and asks the pivotal question, "Are you happy?" (10). His whole life, Montag never really thinks about a career besides a fireman.

His father was one, his grandfather was one, and he followed blindly. As an adult, he carries around a fond memory of himself as a young child. The memory is of him and his mom during a power outage, huddled around a small candle. Montag has always drawn happiness from fire. Now an adult, he draws happiness from the Phoenix on his arm, his job as a fireman.

The Phoenix is a fearsome symbol for those who are hiding books from the government. After Montag reveals the books that lie behind his ventilator grille, a “ phoenix car” drives up to his house (52). Montag’s wife, Mildred, is hysterical as she realizes the consequences of Montag’s actions. The image of “ a man in a black shirt with an orange snake stitched on his arm” and a “ phoenix car” are linked to each other (52). You cannot see one without the other.

The Phoenix that he once wore so proudly on his uniform now carries a sense of dread for him. When he sees his captain, Beatty, arrive at his house in his Phoenix car, Montag is truly scared. The fire of the Phoenix will destroy him if his stash of books are discovered. In Montag’s society, the Phoenix has become a symbol of the government. It is the sign of the force of the firemen, and the destruction that will come across anyone who stands in their way.

It is a sign of oppression. Montag found happiness in fire for so long, but he only just realizes the true horror of the power of the phoenix, of fire. Every few centuries, the Phoenix, “ built a pyre and burnt himself up” (163).

Montag is helping the society, as a whole, burn itself. Its books, its history, its lessons and mistakes, are all being obliterated. Yet “ every time [the

phoenix] burnt himself up he sprang out of the ashes, he got himself born all over again” (163).

Montag was still looking for joy in fire as an adult. He misses that feeling of comfort he felt so long ago around that small candle during a power outage. However, he never finds true happiness in it again. He is still that little boy trying to relive that one special moment. His world has nothing else to make him happy anymore.

He thinks fire is still making him “ happy”, but in reality, he is emotionless and empty just like everyone else in society. He is frozen in a shell created for him by society, forced to be “ happy all the time” (58). Finally, Clarisse comes along and strikes a match against him. His life starts to burn. His outer shell thaws away to reveal his real self. His vision of the society changes.

Burning is no longer pleasurable. Books suddenly ache to be read. Montag finally finds a new life outside the city. He burns his old life and is reborn again. He becomes the new Book of Ecclesiastes. He is able to think and ponder the world, just as Clarisse did.

Only after he sheds his old clothes, does his old life finally fade to ashes, and he is reborn into a new life. The city needed to be burned. The Phoenix was only resurrected after it jumped into the pyre it built itself. The whole city needed to be burned, not just parts of it. The bomb did its job.

Everything was wiped out, the city was flattened, and there were ashes everywhere. It became a clean slate to start over new. In the end, the

meaning of the Phoenix evolves into that of an amazing creature. After it rises from the ashes, the Phoenix is new again. It is the symbol of rebirth, renewal, resurrection, and ultimately a second chance at life.

It has come to mean the very opposite of destruction. Finally, Montag is happy. Finally, fire has come to mean warmth and comfort again. He realizes that the fire “ was not burning. It was warming”(145).

Again, this draws him back to his time as a child. He senses that same feeling of rediscovery, of “ such illumination that space lost its vast dimensions and drew comfortably around [him]” (7). Much like the Phoenix must have felt as it was reborn again. Fire will continue to be Montag’s source of joy. However, it will no longer be a gorging fire, but rather a comforting, gentle light.

It becomes a fire of truth and knowledge, a torch to light his way instead of a fire to burn things. A man named Granger says to Montag, “ Welcome back from the dead,” (150). That is when Montag fully sheds his old identity and is reborn. Fire is a way to make room for new things. The Phoenix represents the good and the bad needed to achieve true happiness. Only through fire did the Phoenix come to existence.

The Phoenix burned itself in order to make a new life. Montag did the same thing. He was unconsciously unsatisfied with his life, and felt as if his life was not meaningful, and he burned, too. Now there’s nothing left of his old life. He’s new again. He cleared away his old thoughts and belief and left an open mind to learn new things and explore the world as it really is, not as society says it is.