

Fahrenheit 451

Literature



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BUSTER**

There are a lot of different themes and symbols throughout the novel Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury. Many of the motifs coincide with the titles of the three sections in the novel. The three sections were 'The Hearth and The Salamander,' 'The Sand and The Sieve,' and lastly 'Burning Bright.' The symbols and themes of this novel varied from dependence on technology to freedom of expression. All throughout the book there is conformity and those who defy the rules and in the end the ones who do not do as they should, survive. While those who listen to orders and do what they are told are annihilated.

The first section of the book's title represents the growth and destruction of families and their connections, while section two's title goes along with the themes of flaws of memory and knowledge and lastly the third section's title is about the symbols of dual uses of fire; good and evil uses. In 'Hearth and the Salamander', the main character Guy Montag loves his job and his wife; at least he thinks he does. With the realization that he does not love his wife or his job comes the destruction of his family and any connections he has to the modern world.

The quote, "There was nowhere to go, no friend to turn to, (page 124)" is proof that he had no one to turn to, no one he cared for. After meeting his strongest human connection, Clarisse, Montag became conscious of the fact that he really did not know his wife at all, although he thought he did. He begins to defy conformity and does exactly the opposite of what the government says he should do, like reading books. Before all of Montag's connections were destroyed, a few connections flourished.

The connection between Guy Montag and Clarisse McClellan, a seventeen year old neighbor, grew a great amount before she was hit by a car and killed. He knew more about her than he knew about his wife of many years. When talking to Mildred about Clarisse's death, Montag stated " Clarisse's favorite subject wasn't herself. It was everyone else, and me. She was the first person in a good many years I've really liked (page 72). " When he said this, Guy realized Clarisse was his first real friend he ever had in his life, which he did not realize he had till she was gone.

After the devastation of the relationship between Clarisse and him, Montag became more interested in books. Montag's love for books grew more and then he found himself quoting them at times, while talking to his co-workers Montag says something that would only be found in a book. " Was it always like this? The firehouse, our work? I mean, well, once upon a time... (Page 34). " After he used the term " once upon a time," people questioned where he got that phrase, and he got it from a book and seeing as though only a few people have read books only they would know, but those people have been shunned from society.

He accumulated about 20 books and still kept one even after he was going to be killed because of his love for the banned literature. The themes that correspond with the title of the second section of Fahrenheit 451, which is ' The Sand and the Sieve', are flaws of memory and knowledge. The entire community has just about lost all memory of the old days, the only people who know the truth about the actual past are deemed crazy. The members of the society all believe whatever they are told, even if what they are told

by the government that a recent event has changed from what they said earlier.

Society as a whole doesn't use its own memory it basically considers the government as their recollection. The government picks which events to tell the public about or books the area are allowed to read, which is just like the sand and the sieve which separates what is wanted with what is considered waste. Instead of the people deciding which events to absorb the government picks for them. Another example is when Mildred takes all of her pills and ends up having to get her stomach pumped. When they were at the hospital, "'Hell! ' the operator's cigarette moved on his lips. We get these cases nine or ten a night. Got so many, starting a few years ago, we had the special machines built. ' (page15)," this states that not only did Mildred have this lapse of memory, but so do at least nine or ten others a day.

Not many people in the population of this novel have actual knowledge, they may think they do but they don't. In this book knowledge is truth and due to the fact that the government censors or changes the truth, almost no one has the power of knowledge. There are only a few people who know the actual truth of the situations going on, and they are Guy Montag, Clarisse, and Faber. " I don't think things, sir, I talk the meaning of things, I sit here and know I am alive, (page75)" Faber is saying how he knows the meanings behind it all, but he doesn't do anything about it because although he can talk about it that doesn't mean that others will believe him over the higher power which is the government, so he uses the truth that he knows and avoids dying.

During the book Montag remembers his childhood memory of using a sieve to separate objects from sand. And the sieve represents his mind trying to grasp and retain this knowledge" (LitCharts). This is like when he was trying to memorize the bible while the toothpaste commercial keeps playing and he has to focus on the book instead of the commercial, which is distracting him. " The fireman's responsibility is to burn books, and therefore destroys knowledge. Through these actions, the firemen promote ignorance to maintain the sameness of society" (Mackey, Erin). All throughout the book there is a symbol, fire, which overlaps with the title of the third section ' Burning Bright".

Fire is just an object, but depending on how it is used it can either be good or evil. " Burn all, burn everything. Fire is bright and fire is clean. (page 60)" Guy's jobs were to burn stuff down and destroy everything, so he was always used to fire being evil and he thought it could only be used for evil, which was wrong. " Although it is used by the totalitarian society as a destructive force, the intellectuals believe that the fire in the city has purged the society of its evil" (The Best Notes). Montag used fire to kill people and burn books.

At the end the city that is obsessed with destruction by the use of fire gets blown up by a bomb and everything is gone. The other use of fire in the book was the use for good. Montag was not used to this and when he encountered a campfire at the camp where all the hoboes lived he said " it was not burning, it was warming (page 145)". Guy Montag then learns that not everything is evil or good it all depends on who uses it and for what purpose. When Montag gets to the hoboes, he notices the fire at the camp was warming and comforting, and that changed everything about fire for Montag.

Clarisse reminds Montag of candle-light, and so fire, when controlled, symbolizes the flickering of self-awareness and knowledge” (LitCharts).

Those who used fire as comfort, warmth, and joy were still safe because of the way they use fire, while the evil uses of fire corrupted the community and even those who didn't use it in evil and destructive ways perished. Each title of the three sections were named the way they are because they match with the themes and symbols that reappear all throughout the novel Fahrenheit 451.

The malevolence and virtuous uses of fire, knowledge, flaws of memory, and the growth and destruction of families and connections are the most important reoccurring themes and symbols all throughout the book. All of these reoccurring motifs and symbols come together to create the wonderful masterpiece that demonstrates the downfall of censoring books and other objects that are people's ideas. This novel creates an image that could happen if today's government decided some books should never be read or seen.