

The importance of history

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Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury depicts a bleak dystopian world where reading is illegal and all books are burned by government firefighters. The book follows the transformation of Guy Montag from book-destroying firefighter to outlaw reader and book hoarder.

Technology has overtaken people's lives, and interpersonal relationships are obsolete. The education system in the society places focus on playing sports and watching videos. Classes like history involve mindlessly memorizing and regurgitating facts without having any real concept of what it means. The book gives a frightening look into a world where history is disregarded and certain parts of history are rewritten to suit the damaging agenda of the government. The citizens of the society have no interest in history, and therefore accept all facts as true without critically judging them. The society quickly deteriorates as a result of the disposal and rewriting of history, as it does not learn from past mistakes in order to solve its problems.

Fahrenheit 451 shows how important history is to a society, and how undermining it will lead to the society's demise. The Fahrenheit 451 society is strictly censored by the government which employs firefighters to arrest those who own books and destroy the books by burning them. The government has absolute control over the minds of the people by removing all writings that may incite thoughts beyond the status quo. Through this censorship, the government creates its own history of the world that goes unquestioned due to the ignorance of the people. An example of this rewriting is the History of Firemen that Montag's boss, Beatty, reads to him. The Firemen were, " Established, 1790, to burn English-influenced books in the Colonies.

First Fireman: Benjamin Franklin.” The government would not want anyone knowing that firemen were of their creation to keep control of the population, so they created a fictitious account of the start of book burning. Because no one studies history, there is no way for citizens to know that they are being fed lies. The practice of rewriting history has been around since the beginning of time, usually involving the victors of a war or conflict making their side known and putting the defeated in infamy. Nowadays, many interest groups attempt to change history for their own benefit.

For example, some strong Christian groups downplay the Founding Fathers opinions on the separation of church and state in order to justify the passing of non-secular, Christian-based laws. People who do not read or study history will believe this skewed history with no question or further investigation, as seen in Fahrenheit 451. The citizens of Fahrenheit 45 have a role in the demise of history, as they do not have any interest in learning about the past, or any subject. Technology has inhibited their ability to love learning and reading. Even before the government started censoring, ordinary citizens had already “ self-censored” by not taking the time to read and learn, instead choosing to watch their giant wall-sized televisions.

This created a lack of curiosity and desire for knowledge, as technology always gives a quick and easily understood response. There is nothing to be curious about in a dumbed-down television program with a simple and predictable plot. Critically thinking about history requires effort; questions must be asked, evidence must be found, and theories must be proven. This is too much work for a society where convenience is cherished. In today’s world, technology is used heavily and reading is declining.

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An average American teenager spends two hours of their day watching television, compared to seven minutes spent reading for leisure. How will history survive if no one is interested in it? One may say that education and schools will keep history alive. Unfortunately, the education system in Fahrenheit 451 does not accomplish this. Their schools leave no room for questions. Clarisse, a teenager Montag meets who is quite different from the rest of her peers, discussed her school, “ We never ask questions, or at least most don’t; they just run the answers at you.

” Facts are consumed without thought or analysis, they are simply memorized and regurgitated when need be. An understanding of history is critical for society to function, and most importantly, for society to learn from. One of the reasons why books are feared in Fahrenheit society is the fact that they point out the flaws in society, which then have to be dealt with or ignored. Montag’s mentor, Faber, explains this, “ So now do you see why books are hated and feared? They show the pores in the face of life. The comfortable people want only wax moon faces, poreless, hairless, expressionless.” People are afraid of facing their mistakes, so they just ignore them, not wanting to have to take the responsibility to solve them.

History has the same effect. History calls for a reflection on mistakes made by ancestors. Some of these mistakes are almost too horrendous to imagine and many leave behind a legacy that must be dealt with. These mistakes can also be a blessing, as they help in making sure the same blunders are not repeated. The people of Fahrenheit 451 are in a dark age of limited education. They do not study history and therefore have no knowledge of historical events and their impact on humanity.

An example of this is their willingness to use nuclear weapons to win conflicts. Most Americans today with an understanding of history would not want to resort to nuclear warfare because of their knowledge of the devastation created by the two atomic bombs used on Japan in 1945. In Fahrenheit, the people are ignorant to this and do not voice concern at the use of nuclear weapons. If they study history, they would know the destruction they are causing and the danger they place their country in, as Montag's city is destroyed by a weapon of mass destruction. An understanding of history is one of the best resources a society can have. Without it, when problems arise, there will be no prior wisdom to reflect on for a possible solution.

A world with no history is essentially starting from scratch. Although being exposed to the “ pores” in a society's historical legacy may be difficult, it is necessary for a complete comprehension of the past and the ability to move on free from previous faults. Fahrenheit 451 is a dystopia, where a repressive government goes as far as to rewrite history and outlaw books in order to manipulate its people. In addition to this, a lack of motivation and curiosity for learning by the people has made the study of history obsolete. The book depicts a bleak future for this civilization, as well as a long, arduous period of rebuilding from the knowledge of the past that must be relearned.

History is an integral part of society and should be preserved in its truest original form, while being constantly debated and analyzed in order to get the most meaning from it. In doing so, a fate similar to that in Fahrenheit 451 can be avoided and the society can move ahead. As the Swedish

philosopher Soren Kierkegaard once stated, “ Life must be lived forward, but it can only be understood backward.”