

Fahrenheit 451 vs. 1984 essay sample

Government



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Fahrenheit 451 and 1984 are two different books with a lot of similarities and although written years ago, can still be applicable to the world today. Several conflicting frames of mind have played defining roles in shaping humanity throughout the twentieth century. Visions of a bright future held by humanity were taken advantage of by the promise of a better life through the sacrifice of individuality to the state. The trickery and the treachery by both ruling government shows their similarities in their oppressive control and this is very evident in both novels. The novels 1984 by George Orwell and Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury established the atmosphere of the government control over everything the citizens do—even in what they think. Fear of the consequences of acting in the non-prescribed way is shown through the protagonists, who were the few people in each novel to eventually find the light and what constitutes as a good life, only for it to be their biggest flaw. A single character is alienated because of his inability to conform and accept the laws of society.

The similar fear of the abuse of power and technology of the state at the expense of human individuality, core values etc. present within these novels speaks to the relevance of these novels within their historical context and their usefulness for awakening people to the horrendous consequences of their ignorance. Warnings of what society could possibly degenerate to are presented in 1984 by George Orwell and in Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury. Both novels contain vivid dystopian worlds from which we can see strong resemblances to our present societies and that is the dangers of a controlled government and how visible this control is in both novels.

The governments in novels Big Brother and The Party in 1984 and The Firemen in Fahrenheit 451 have dominant control over their citizens and they have a lot of similarities in their ways of controlling. Their want for more and more power is a vivid example of control in the novels. In 1984, this can be seen throughout the novel as the government tries to eliminate everything pleasurable. According to the ruling party, they try to create a dystopian society where even sex is just a formality and not for pleasure. But in the future there will be no wives and no friends. Children will be taken from their mothers at birth, as one takes eggs from a hen. The sex instinct will be eradicated. Procreation will be an annual formality like the renewal of a ration card. We shall abolish the orgasm. Our neurologists are at work upon it now. (Orwell 267)

In the novel Fahrenheit 451 the main struggle for power deals with the government. This overly oppressive, almost Orwellian style bureaucracy tries to make sure there is no interaction with books at all. They believe that books permeate their society and corrupt the minds of the people.

Unannounced searches of property by “ Firemen” are not at all uncommon. At the slightest inkling of this futuristic contraband, these firemen will rummage through all of one’s property, at times, destroying everything in their path. On the opposite side of that spectrum, there is a struggle for power by the people as well. There is the woman who hid several thousand volumes of books in her house. She loves these books so much that when the firemen ransacked her house, she went down with the books without hesitation. She did not care what they were going to do to her.

Another example of the similarities is the elements used for control in both novels. In 1984, there were a lot of elements used. Telescreens for example was a very important element in the play. There was a telescreen in every house and the ‘proles’ could not put it off. It could see everyone and everything and it was put there just to watch the people and also reprimand or in ‘Newspeak’ vaporize them of any bad actions towards the government. “Winston kept his back to the telescreen. It was safer; but as he knew, even a back can be revealing” (Orwell 3). This comment just goes as far to tell the audience the extent to which fear was inputted into everyone in the play just in an attempt to maintain their control in this ‘dystopian’ society. In Fahrenheit 451, they are fire fighters but instead, they set fire on books and houses that have books. Element of control can clearly be seen there as they do not want people reading books as they believe it only corrupts the mind and according to Beatty the head of the fire department, it always angers some people. “While the book went sparkling whirled and blew away on a wind turned dark with burning” (Bradbury 3-4).

Control is one of the major themes in the novels 1984 and Fahrenheit 451 and it is mostly showcased on the government. The citizen’s ignorance in both novels and how the governments cultivates that by making them feel everything was okay and thereby deceiving them into facing reality. In Fahrenheit 451, everything that the government encourages the people to do while at work are just acts of distracting people. They prefer people watching television and driving recklessly on the road to them reading books. “How did you get so empty? He wondered. Who takes it out of you?” (Bradbury 44) In this conversation, Guy Montag tries to talk to his wife

but all she cares about are the television characters than she does to him. She even goes as far as to call them her family.

In 1984, this can be seen when O'Brien tries to convince Winston about Big Brother by trying to make him realize that the party owns existence now and there is nothing he can do but follow. He wanted Winston to use the 'If you can't beat them then join them' kind of philosophy. "Reality only exists in the human mind and nowhere else. Not in individual; only in the mind of the party, which is collective and immortal" (Orwell 261)

Even Beatty tries to change Montag's affinity for books and he tries to convince him that they destroy books because it always offends someone and they want to stop that. "The new society as he explains allow all people rich or poor, stupid, smart, to get a sense of motion without moving" (Bradbury 56).

Brainwashing of minds was one of the main objectives of both governments in the novels and all of these were just in an attempt once again to keep power. Due to the incontestable control of the government, and it's oppression to its citizens, the safety of all opposed to the government are in danger. In 1984, the audience can relate to this due to the comparable suffering both Julia and Winston went through in the play. And due to the harsh treatments, they were forced to betray each other.

"I betrayed you," she said baldly.

"I betrayed you," he said.

She gave him another quick look of dislike.

"Sometimes," she said, "they threaten you with something—something you

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can't stand up to, can't even think about. And then you say, ' Don't do it to me, do it to somebody else, do it to so-and-so.' And perhaps you might pretend, afterwards, that it was only a trick and that you just said it to make them stop and didn't really mean it. But that isn't true. At the time when it happens you do mean it. You think there's no other way of saving yourself and you're quite ready to save yourself that way. You want it to happen to the other person. You don't give a damn what they suffer. All you care about is yourself."

" All you care about is yourself," he echoed.

" And after that, you don't feel the same toward the other person any longer."

" No," he said, " you don't feel the same." (Orwell 292)

In Fahrenheit 451, it is very evident as there were so many times they wanted to kill Guy Montag the protagonist after they could not change him. They oppressed him a lot and an example of where that can be seen is when Beatty forces him to burn his house and then Beatty places him under arrest. When Beatty continues to berate Montag, Montag turns the flamethrower on his superior and proceeds to burn him to ashes. Montag knocks the other firemen unconscious and runs. The Mechanical Hound, a monstrous machine that Beatty has set to attack Montag, pounces and injects Montag's leg with a large dose of anaesthetic. Montag manages to destroy it with his flamethrower; then he walks off the numbness in his leg and escapes with some books that were hidden in his backyard.

Both the freedom from ignorance of the protagonists eventually changes their behaviours from law abiding to law breaking citizens and it also led to their new understanding of what constituted life. Montag is a fireman and in the novel, the firefighters are a disciplinary force in society that actually starts fires instead of stopping them. As in the case of Winston, initially Montag is not suspected of treachery since he is a ‘model citizen’ who enjoys his job of destroying books, which society has deemed as troublesome and saddening. Being part of the group that burns books would seem to those around him as a poor candidate for breaking the law and reading them.

Eventually, however, there is a change in Montag, and he starts to desire for the knowledge, awareness and opportunity that he thinks books can provide. He considers this thirst as an urge described as “poison working up his wrists and into his elbows and his shoulders, and then the jumpover from shoulder blade to shoulder blade like a spark leaping a gap” (Bradbury 41). Montag proceeds to break the law by reading as many books as he can. Winston in 1984 is also a familiar character that Fahrenheit 451 produced; the protagonist breaks the law by committing thought crime which is the worst type of crime to commit. He commits this thought crime when he started writing his diary on page 8. “DOWN WITH BIG BROTHER over and over again filling half a page.” (Orwell 18)

Their offense is what begins their struggle with the government and as such lead to the government’s ‘harsh’ action towards them and at the end, they both had ironic endings as Winston finally conforms and agree with the

government while Guy Montag continues his struggle by joining new friends to move on to search for survivors and rebuild civilization.

An important or perhaps the most important theme that occurs in the essay is that of destruction of human values. In both novels, a human value seems to have been diminished to the lowest level. In 1984, there are almost no human values left in most of the people of the society and that is how Big Brother likes it. Even the ‘proles’ enjoy watching the execution of their peers. “It was a good hanging said Syme reminiscently. I think it spoils it when they tie their feet together. (Orwell 49). Syme believes that it is okay for people to be hanged and it is not fun when their legs are tied. This is just to show you the extent to which human values are no longer revered. It is also the same for Fahrenheit 451 when even teenagers kill each other for fun whether or not on purpose it doesn’t matter. “I’m afraid of children my own age. They kill each other. Did he always use to be that way? (Bradbury 30) The control of the government over its citizens is all so eminent here that almost all if not all have been vanquished and both government sees nothing wrong with it. On the contrary, they like it.

Orwell’s 1984 and Bradbury’s Fahrenheit 451 are both creative visions of what the authors felt society should be concerned about turning into. The novels offer different details on interesting scenarios, but they share similarities in their leaders, the control over their people and the destruction of human values. The protagonists’ resistance to conform to the norms of their dystopian society led to their severe punishments and betrayal as well their change from law abiding to law breaking citizens. Even though these stories were written around 1950, they are still quite applicable to the world <https://assignbuster.com/fahrenheit-451-vs-1984-essay-sample/>

today. The popularity of these books does rule out the possibility of such a society coming into existence in the future, however, the dangers of a controlled government and how visible it is in both novels should issue a wake-up call to society on how dangerous controlled governments and how almost impossible it is to get rid of them.