

Dystopian in 1984 and fahrenheit 451; government



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Dystopian novels have erupted in popularity. Two of the couple dystopian novels to have become famous were George Orwell's 1984 and Ray Bradbury's Fahrenheit 451, classic examples of the genre. Although there is a display of contrasting ideas that make each intriguing novel stand out, they still have much in common, especially due to the time they were published. The characteristics of a dystopian novel are shown through the society that the people lived in, especially from the mindset that the U.S. was in during the 1950's. The two main characters from these novels discover major problems in their societies and try to fix them. Orwell and Bradbury apprise against utopia through the portrayal of their protagonist as being a part of a society in which the individual comes into contact with influences that cause their rebellions and eventually come into contact with the government. Therefore, Winston and Montag's character development demonstrate the many similarities and differences between the two dystopian novels in the way they live their meaningless, government controlled life, the pleasure they receive from carrying out their job, their unsuccessful marriage to meeting a life changing woman, and their rebellion that leads them to their ultimate change as a character.

The unnerving theme gave way to the main concern of the protagonists brought up in 1984 and Fahrenheit 451; government efforts to shape the day-to-day lives of citizens in order to fit their hidden political agendas and control the people. This theme is a significant similarity that the two novels share, where the main characters lead meaningless lives under complete control and constant restriction. In 1984, George Orwell creates a technology advanced dystopian future that Winston Smith, unfortunately, lives in.

In this future, independent thought is seen as a severe criminal offence. Citizens who willingly partake in this form of individualism are persecuted for being guilty of committing illegal thoughts, infamously known as thoughtcrime. This is supposedly carried out and justified to be in the name of the 'greater good' of the people. The notorious quote, "Big Brother is watching you" (Orwell 3), is a constant warning that appears on posters throughout Oceania. Big Brother is used to represent an all knowing authoritative ruler that invades privacy in order to eradicate individuality completely. "Winston kept his back turned to the telescreen. It was later, though, as he well knew, even a back can be revealing" (Orwell 6). The simplest of movements and expressions are illegal, essentially meaning there is no way to express oneself.

Under these exact circumstances that Winston lives in, life is completely meaningless and bland. Tactics of fear and intimidation are inflicted on the citizens of Oceania. Telescreens and other forms of technology limit what an individual can do in their own home and individuals cannot express individuality at all. With this, Winston is more than unhappy and struggles to live in this society.

This idea is similar to Bradbury's Fahrenheit 451 in the sense that books are completely banned from public viewing and are burnt immediately if seen, discovered, or reported to the government. Guy Montag, the main protagonist in Bradbury's novel, lives in a society where television controls people's lives, ultimately a form of brainwashing. Books are illegal to the public. They are a physical representation of a person's independent thinking and individuality.

They symbolize freedom of thought and free will, something citizens within this society think they have, but in reality, they certainly do not. These are what can destroy this controlled society, according to the government, and are therefore banned from existing at all. "Established, 1790, to burn English-influenced books in the Colonies... Answer the alarm quickly. Start fire swiftly. Burn everything. Report back to firehouse immediately. Stand alert for other Alarms" (Bradbury 32).

The government of this society inflicts these strict rules that cause fear, and Montag, as well as the rest of the population, must abide by them and carry out the job of destroying these books. People who work for the department responsible for carrying out this job, like Montag, not only burn the books, but burn the citizens into the ground that live in their homes as well. Those are the consequences for owning a simple book. Winston and Montag work under their government. However, they share the same admiration and liking towards their own jobs, despite the dark, manipulating reason behind them. Winston, being an outer party member, works in the Ministry of Truth. His job is altering historical documents in favour of the party.

He must rectify certain articles or news items to ensure the Party is always proven right, no matter its original predictions and actual outcomes. In spite of the dreadful reason for the purpose of his job, Winston admits to enjoying the tediousness of it. "Winston's greatest pleasure in life was in his work.

Most of it was a tedious routine, but included in it there were also jobs so difficult and intricate that you could lose yourself in them as in the depths of a mathematical problem" (Orwell 46). Winston confesses that his greatest

pleasure in life is his work. He is good at it, and although he despises the Party's reinvention of the past, he ironically takes pleasure in finding unique ways to complete particularly challenging documents. Similarly, in the beginning of Fahrenheit 451, Montag found absolute pleasure in carrying out his job within the fire department.

Montag's occupation in the novel is a fireman, and unlike firemen in today's society, firemen in Fahrenheit 451 burn books and the houses where they are illegally kept. At the start of the novel, Montag seems to be the quintessential fireman; finding full delightment in the action of burning books along with the homes that keep them hidden. "It was a pleasure to burn..." (Bradbury 1). Being a third-generation fireman, he is prideful and enjoys dressing in his uniform, playing the role of a symphony conductor as he directs the brass nozzle towards all the books that are felonious. "Montag grinned the fierce grin of all men singed and driven back by flame" (Bradbury 27). It is a prestigious job to have in the society that he lives in and there is a great amount of masculine pride he indulges when doing so. By analyzing the two novels main protagonists, it is ironic that both the main characters enjoy certain aspects of their job, despite the true purpose of them. The main protagonists are married, but are not successful in their relationship in any way.

Technically, Winston is still married to Katherine, but since divorce is not prohibited, they merely just lost track of each others whereabouts. In 1984, marriages are only allowed if couples are not attracted to each other.

Passion and affection are also never to be expressed. The only reason marriages existed in this society is to keep the population going so the

government could have more workers. When they meet and begin to fall in love, Winston begins to feel alive again. His mind even starts to encourage the thought of a possible covert movement against the Party. " For a moment he was violently angry. During the month he had known her, the nature of his desire for her had changed.

Their first love making had been simply an act of the will" (Orwell 98). Being a questioning character from the start, he just wanted to know how the Party holds all this power and for what motive. Winston feels hopeless, however, he still believes that he cannot be the only one with the same mindset. Overall, after a state of confusion and struggling, he finally meets Julia who makes him feel something again. Since there is little to no opportunity to think and express loving emotions, marriages are cohabiting than they are deep meaningful relationships. Like Winston, Montag is married as well. Montag describes his wife, Mildred Montag, to be shallow and mediocre. In the past two and a half years, Montag experiences a great feeling of emptiness and disaffection, yet he cannot name the cause of this growing ache and discontentment.

Daily, he returns to a loveless, meaningless marriage with Mildred. As the novel progresses, Montag becomes increasingly unhappy as he realizes he has been living an empty, unfulfilling life. Through a newfound friendship with Clarisse McClellan, a woman he meets early on in the novel, Montag perceives the harshness of society.

Clarisse asks him the first time they meet, " Are you happy?" (Bradbury 7). When she questions Montag about not being in love, he sinks into despair

and realizes something. He comes to realize that he is certainly not in love with his wife. He is repulsed with himself and those around him for choosing to embrace the unimportant, blandness of reality rather than examine what lies truly in the depths of books. He started to think on his own and began to really open his eyes, all due to Clarisse. Like Winston, Montag sees his surroundings in a completely new light than he did before. Both Winston and Montag rebel against totalitarian regimes within their society that lead them to their ultimate change as a character.

Winston and Julia are taken to be interrogated in the Ministry of Love. In room 101, he is tortured into submission. As a result of this traumatic experience, Winston loses the love he had for Julia, the urge for rebellion, and dies mentally. Essentially, Winston loses his humanity, succumbing to the control exerted by the Party. "And what he wanted, more even than to be loved, was to break down that wall of virtue... The sexual act, successfully performed, was rebellion" (Orwell 70). More than anything, Winston seeks the utmost truth and the only way to attain that is by rebelling against the totalitarian rule of the Party.

However, it is unfortunate that in result of his actions, Winston's final transformation takes place after his torture and re-education by O'Brien. By the end of it, Winston is a shell of his former self. He looks at the telescreen and realizes that he finally loves Big Brother. This is his final downfall. The contributing similarity between the two novels is this factor of attempt of rebellion.

Montag, along with Clarisse and Granger, violate the rules of the society greatly. Montag steals books when he is sent to burn them. "So it was the hand that started it all... His hands had been infected, and it soon it would be his arms... His hands were ravenous" (Bradbury 41). He continues to commit the same crime by taking more books and reading them aloud in front of his wife, scaring her, resulting in her turning him into the authorities. Montag even goes as far as to set Captain Beatty on fire.

However, unlike Winston's decisions near the end of the novel, Montag's actions result in triumph. After all the events, he evades the government, manages to find peace in a community of like-minded people, and finally escapes the destruction of a nuclear war. Unlike Winston, Montag was able to succeed in finding freedom. Both Winston Smith and Guy Montag, two unique characters, successfully demonstrate the direct aim of Orwell and Bradbury's train of thought; warning people of the possible dangers of the future. By examining Winston and Montag's character development from within the society of a dystopian world, their genuine liking towards their job, their relationship with a woman they meet that influences their actions greatly, and their rebellion and overall change as a character, it is clear that the two novels create a thought provoking idea in many similar, yet dramatically different ways.