

Discussion of differences between clarisse and mildred in farhenheit 451 essay sa...

[Family](#), [Marriage](#)



While both Clarisse and Mildred are not main characters, they are extremely important supporting characters in the novel. Their influence on Guy Montag is one that cannot be ignored as they both portray opposite extremes of his feelings. Only through these opposing characters does Montag open up and show his true, inner feelings.

In the first section of the novel, it never gives Clarisse a true age. She only makes this simple statement: " I'm seventeen and I'm crazy" [Bradbury 7], implying she is in her late teens and putting explanation to her odd behavior. Guy Montag finds Clarisse on his way home from the fire station one late evening and offers to walk her home since she is so young and it is already dark outside. Clarisse delightfully accepts the invitation and begins the barrage of questioning. This questioning becomes a key part of the character of Clarisse, whatever she looks at, hears about, thinks about, she questions it. Question after question, until she can understand it or at least be satisfied for the time being. While, Montag does not always understand her logic or line of thought, he begins to enjoy her companionship and her random questions and thoughts.

Guy Montag is also married and has a wife of ten years named Mildred. Mildred is portrayed at the exact opposite of Clarisse. Instead of being an outsider who is always questioning and wanting to understand more and more and enjoy the simple things in life. Mildred is the stereotypical stay at home wife of the time. She stays home all day long, cleans house and watches her plot less, pointless soap operas. She is the perfect example of a conformed individual of the futuristic society. But from this conformity, she is

flawed. She is left with an emptiness inside which is shown in her attempted suicide when she is first introduced. When Montag comes home, he walks in their bedroom to find her overdosed on sleeping pills in the bed. He calls the emergency number only to have a few maintenance workers come over and do what they say is a "normal routine" and that it happens nine to ten times a night. More proof that many individuals in the society are having similar feelings. When she wakes up from this attempted suicide, she denies it ever happened and just went on her normal day of cleaning and soap operas. His wife's hollow minded view of the same repeated pointless activities daily bores the intellectually stimulated Montag who begins to challenge his own thoughts and he looks elsewhere to explore them [Bradbury 15].

These two opposing characters help show the true character of Guy Montag. On one side there is the young, questioning teenager Clarisse and the other there is the stereotypical, boring wife Mildred. Just like the two sides of Guy Montag, the one side that wants to follow the rules and laws of the government and time and conform with the normal in society like Mildred and there is the side of Montag that wants to reach out for more, to understand, to learn, to comprehend something greater. When faced with this confrontation of two opposites, Guy Montag follows his emotions.

He shows his true emotions for Mildred when he states: "And he remembered thinking then that if she died, he was certain he wouldn't cry." [Bradbury 44]. Showing that his connection with Mildred was so dull, boring and lifeless that they had no real loving connection, one that a true husband and wife would have. And his emotions for Clarisse that he gained in only a

few days begin to show through. He enjoyed her companionship greatly and could not understand her, and that is what made him enjoy her even more. To Guy Montag, Clarisse was something else, something mystifying, the unknown.

Thus, while neither Clarisse nor Mildred are main characters in the first part of the novel, they both play critical roles in the development of the main character, Guy Montag. Without them, it would be impossible for his emotions to grow and connect to one another and turn Montag into the person he becomes in the following parts.