

# Censorship in todayr's world

Literature, Russian Literature



In Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*, the society in which people live is full of censorship. He writes about a how all books are burned because the people decided that knowledge brings pain. In the first hard-cover edition for the book, Neil Gaiman wrote the Introduction (xi) in which he commented that *Fahrenheit 451* should be taken as a warning and reminder that freedom of speech needs to be valued and not taken granted.

Censorship is a tool used today by governments across the world to control or stop people who say or write anything that challenges the government's assumptions. Freedom of speech allows people to speak openly and have their thoughts and opinions heard without fearing punishment by others who do not agree. The Founding Fathers of the United States of America felt so strongly about this issue that they made freedom of speech the first of the Amendments to the Constitution. In Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*, and in the world today, censorship works on the perception that some ideas are dangerous and must be stopped; however, the ideal is to have the decision left to the individual and not the government.

To begin, there are different ways to ban books or online content. Most governments have a review process that controls what books people read or what online content they access. In an article written in *Censorship. Laws. com*, censorship in America is defined as the act of altering, adjusting, editing, or banning of any or all media resulting from the presumption that its content is perceived to be objectionable, incendiary, illicit, or immoral by the Federal Government of the United States. In *AZ Quotes. com*, it is noted that Thomas Jefferson said the following: Censorship represents a tyranny over the mind and is harmful wherever it occurs. People can experience

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censorship in various areas of life; for example, politics, religion, the internet, and the news to name a few. The freedom to read is necessary to the way of life in free countries; however, this freedom is being attacked. Private groups and public authorities throughout the world are working to remove certain books from public schools while also trying to silence magazines and newspapers when the government feels the information is not in support of their ideology. When people are prevented from reading materials it prevents those with inquiring minds from seeking the truth, stretching their mental stimulation, and becoming critical thinkers. In ThoughtCo. com, an article was written on August 4, 2018 about how schools can bypass lengthy procedures for banning books by simply electing not to buy questionable books in the first place. The article further stated that because of witchcraft themes in two Harry Potter books by J. K. Rowling, an elementary school in Florida elected not to stock these books.

It was noted that the Principal explained they did not buy these books because they expected complaints if the children read these books. The article cites that Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is fourth on the list of 50 books banned in the United States because of the use of the use of a racial slur (N-word). The other 49 books banned in the United States are posted in *The New York Times*. The First Amendment provides some degree of protection for academic freedom, which is an essential element of a democratic society. For example, in 1957 in *Sweezy v. New Hampshire*, the Court declared: The essentiality of freedom in the community of American universities is almost self-evident. No one should underestimate the vital role in a democracy that is played by those who guide and train our youth. To

impose any strait jacket upon the intellectual leaders in our colleges and universities would imperil the future of our Nation. Teachers and students must always remain free to inquire, to study and to evaluate, to gain new maturity and understanding; otherwise, our civilization will stagnate and die. In an article written in the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE) in June 2016, it stated that colleges and universities needed to be protected by the First Amendment to allow teachers the academic freedom to address their students questions, the study of materials and sources, and teaching. It further stated that there needed to be meaningful discussions between teachers and students without the government discouraging or stopping them.

In another article written by The New York Times on October 1, 2018 it was reported that since 2014 the government of Kuwait has banned over 4, 000 books. This action resulted in its citizens organizing demonstrations to show their displeasure with their government. It seems that even encyclopedias and childrenr's books are not exempt from being targeted for censorship. An encyclopedia with a picture of Michelangelor's David and a Disney version of The Little Mermaid were banned because David had no fig leaf to cover his body, and the mermaid wore half a bikini. This was considered promiscuous.

In an article written by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) on September 24, 2018 it was reported that China shut down thousands of websites and online accounts citing the online material was spreading " improper values, vulgarity or obscenity and the government felt this type of information was considered harmful for the people In Bradburyr's Fahrenheit 451 (79), Faber explained to Montag that books like the Bible were important

because they had quality, texture, pores and features. Faber further explained that the more pores a book has, the more truthfully recorded details of life can get on paper and that would make people literary. Montag explains to Montag that is the reason why books are hated and feared.

Next, some governments try to drive peopler's thoughts and beliefs and prevent free press. In an article written in The Huffington Post on April 25, 2017, it was cited that North Korea is one of the most heavily censored countries in the world. North Korear's leader, Kim Jong Un has complete control in of the information that is communicated to the public. The media in this country is owned solely by the government and the official Central Korean News Agency conveys the opinions of the government. In the U. S. Department of Stater's website, it notes there are no independent media in North Korea and no deviation from the official government line is tolerated. The government does not allow any editorial freedom and all stories are centrally directed and reviewed to ensure that they are in line with the governmentr's ideology. The government also controls its citizens academic and cultural content and takes steps to block radio broadcasts outside of North Korea. The government also modifies television and radio equipment to prevent users from accessing foreign material and other material the government deems illegal. The North Korean government imposes harsh punishments for anyone accused of accessing uncensored information or sharing news from countries that it considers its enemies. In an article in Radio Free Asia dated March 16, 2014 it reports that the North Korean government wants its citizens to be blind and does not want its citizens to be offered alternative knowledge to the narrative the government has given

them. Their goal is not to inform, but to indoctrinate and control common people, to explain to them what they should think about the world.

In Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* (80), Faber tells Montag that the television is real, and messages rush in quickly with their conclusions that people do not have time to protest. A CNN article dated December 29, 2016 reported that news rarely leaks from North Korea's authoritarian state; however, stories of Kim's brutal executions have sometimes filtered out over the past five years. It was cited that Kim Jong Un came to power in 2011 and since then he has ordered 340 people be executed to tighten his hold on power. North Korea is strictly controlled by the state to the point where citizens are unable or nearly unable to get a hold on books or other forms of art produced outside the country. This is because the North Korean government does not want its citizens to be offered alternative knowledge to the account the government has given them. In Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* (102), Captain Beatty quotes Alexander Pope: A little learning is a dangerous thing. Drink deep or taste not the Pierian spring; There shallow draughts intoxicate the brain and drinking largely sobers us again. What this means is that when people begin to learn, they become thirsty for more information and become more aware in the process to challenge what is being said to them. The North Korean government is like the government in *Fahrenheit 451* because both governments do not want to expose its citizens to information that contradicts their ideology.

Lastly, the news has reported over the years that journalists have been suppressed, kidnapped, and at times murdered, for reporting stories that

were not complimentary about their government. Thomas Jefferson was quoted as saying Our liberty depends on the freedom of press, and that cannot be limited without being lost. Most recently a journalist for The Washington Post was murdered for speaking out against the Saudi government while a CNN journalist's White House press pass was taken from him because he asked questions that the President of the United States deemed inappropriate. President Trump has gone as far as labeling the news media as fake news and the enemy of the American people. As a result of the White House taking away a CNN journalist's press pass, CNN filed a lawsuit against the Trump Administration citing the White House's action violated CNN and their journalist's First Amendment rights of freedom of the press, and their Fifth Amendment rights to due process. CNN felt that if this action was left unchallenged it could negatively affect other journalists who cover elected officials. Protect Democracy and The Yale Law School Media Freedom of Information and Access Clinic also filed a lawsuit on behalf of PEN America (a leading organization of writers and literary professionals) against President Trump for violating the First Amendment rights of journalists by using government powers to punish the speech of his media critics. PEN alleges that President Trump has used, or threatened to use, the regulatory and enforcement powers of government to punish the speech of journalists in at least four ways: initiating a government review to raise postal rates; directing DOJ enforcement actions; interfering with White House press access; and threatening to revoke broadcast licenses. In the end, the CNN journalist's press pass was restored; however, the White House threatened to establish rules of conduct for journalist.

In Bradbury's Fahrenheit 451 (58), Captain Beatty tells Montag: If you dont want a man unhappy politically, dont give him two sides to a question to worry him; give him one. Better yet, give him none. Let him forget there is such a thing as war. He further says: Cram them full of non-combustible data, chock them so damned full of ? facts they feel stuffed, but absolutely ? brilliant with information.

Ray Bradbury wrote Fahrenheit 451 during the McCarthy era, during which thousands of Americans were investigated for having Communist sympathies. Like the story line in Fahrenheit 451, neighbors and coworkers were encouraged to report on each other, and nothing more than a suspicion was often enough to begin an investigation. People were encouraged to testify against one another and the accused experienced loss of work, career loss and some even killed themselves. Bradbury vehemently denied that he was satirically commenting on McCarthy or government censorship. Instead, Bradbury insisted the book was written at the beginning of the television age and was a tale to warn society of how they could well reach to television as a sort of drug. Fahrenheit 451, Bradbury said, was a depiction of a society willfully dumbing itself down by staring at screens, stuffing its collective consciousness with useless factoids, empty ideas and throwaway reality. Bradbury's thoughts were several decades before todayr's reality TV and celebrity driven media. Bradbury wrote about a future where technology drove people to block themselves from the world around them, disconnected from each other, and no longer valued books. Today you cannot go anywhere without observing people engrossed on their iPhones and not interacting with others or texting a person who is sitting across from or next



to them. It is troubling that today there are television commercials having to remind parents to engage with their children by reading, talking and singing to them from a very early age to better prepare their kids for school.

The commercial shows a parent engrossed on her cell phone and ignoring her child. Fahrenheit 451 argues in favor of literature and critical thinking and against censorship and blind conformity. In Fahrenheit 451 (1968), it was noted that from a young age Bradbury was affected by accounts of the burning of the ancient library at Alexandria and the loss of many classical works that we now know only by title or through fragments of surviving parchment. Based on todayr's society, Bradburyr's prediction of a world without actual books is not too far off. Government budget cuts result in less support for public libraries and online books now replace actual books you can touch. Bradbury experienced opposition since Fahrenheit 451 was published in 1953, which is kind of funny that a book about banned books experienced censorship. In the ThoughtCo. com article written on August 4, 2018, it noted that one of Bradburyr's plays was sent to a university to be produced; however, the university had a concern that there were no female characters in the play. The university did not state any issues with the content of the play or the fact that there was a reason it featured only men. The play was not produced and was in effect censored because it did not want to offend a certain group at the school: women.

In closing, censorship has been around for a long time and was a thought that preceded the United States Constitution; hence, the First Amendment. Censorship silences peopler's opinions, ideas and forces moral and ethical

values on society. Some people believe censorship is a violation of their First Amendment right and others believe censorship is needed to protect peopler's well-being in a world filled with violence and abusive behavior. All media needs to have checks and balances to ensure the information being published is accurate so that people, and not the government, can choose to be exposed to the appropriate awareness of society, and the world in general, as it really exists and not like the dystopian world of Fahrenheit 451.

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