

Totalitarianism and censorship in 1984 and fahrenheit 451



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The Dangers of Totalitarianism: A dystopian novel, “ 1984” written by George Orwell, attacks the idea of totalitarian communism (a political system in which one ruling party plans and controls the collective social action of a state) by painting a terrifying picture of a world in which personal freedom is nonexistent. Orwell criticizes totalitarianism of all types and brings up questions concerning social status of citizens and the role of politics in the society. Orwell’s main goal was to warn of the serious danger totalitarianism poses to society.

He goes to great lengths to demonstrate the terrifying degree of power and control a totalitarian regime can acquire and maintain. In such regimes, notions of personal rights and freedoms and individual thought are pulverized under the all-powerful hand of the government. Censorship; Mass media dictatorship and ant intellectualism: In Fahrenheit 451, Ray Bradbury uses “ artificial stimulus”, such as television and radio, to provide the reader with a feeling of how isolated the public is and how their minds are being controlled by the government in the twenty-first century.

He uses technology and drugs, to show the forcefulness of the government in his novel. One of the most important themes that occur in both novels is that of alienation and isolation, which is best shown through the main character of each novel. A predominately totalitarian government has used censorship as a means to destroy anything they do not agree with showing the readers how terrible government censorship and mindless conformity can be. 1.

After seeing many of his fellow writers and other entertainers being “blacklisted” by Senator Joseph McCarthy in the early 1950’s, Ray Bradbury criticizes the censorship of the early 1950’s by displaying these same themes in his futuristic dystopia novel Fahrenheit 451. Published in 1953 during the Cold War, the novel reflects Bradbury’s concerns about censorship and conformity during a period when free expression of ideas could lead to social and economic ban.

Correspondingly, Orwell having witnessed firsthand the horrific lengths to which totalitarian governments in Spain and Russia would go in order to sustain and increase their power and the accompanying destruction of civil liberties, honest government, and economic strength, he designed 1984 to inform the Western nations still unsure about how to approach the rise of communism. In 1949, the Cold War had not yet escalated, many American intellectuals supported communism, and the state of diplomacy between democratic, (a political system where the people rule [Wilson G3]), and communist nations was highly vague.

Orwell was deeply disturbed by the widespread cruelties and oppressions he observed in communist countries, and seems to have been particularly concerned by the role of technology in enabling oppressive governments to monitor and control their citizens. Orwell portrays a state in which government monitors and controls every aspect of human life to the extent that even having a disloyal thought is against the law. 1. Several conflicting frames of mind have played defining roles in shaping humanity throughout the twentieth century.

Vision of a bright future held by humanity was taken advantage of by the promise of a better life through sacrifice of individuality to the state. In “1984” by George Orwell and Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury, clear opposition to these elusive obstructions was voiced. These books established the atmosphere and seductiveness of “utopia” and fear of the consequences of acting in the non-prescribed way through character development. A single character is alienated because of his inability to conform. The characters struggle to hide this fact from the state’s ruthless supervision.

This struggle leads them to eventual conflict with some hand of the state, which serves as the author’s voice presenting the reader with the ludicrousness of the principles on which the society is based. The main characters are, or become, unable to conform to the society’s standards and the characters represent the authors’ view of the ‘utopia’ as they see it with the veil of ignorance removed. The authors of both these novels saw the ‘utopian’ societies to be a trap for weak-minded publics, and that once in place, such systems would be able to perpetuate indefinitely due to the efficiency at which they protect and propagate themselves.

Through fear, diversion and sedation the utopia can maintain a strong grip on the people it encompasses before anyone realizes the sacrifices made. The characters’ struggles to hide their newly found individuality. In Orwell’s interpretation of the totalitarian state of 1984, the societies are technically and urbanely engineered to spy on and perceive people’s very thoughts. The society justifies these invasions by eliminating the importance of the individual. When individuality itself becomes the crime the horrifying dystopia follows.

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The similar fear of the state's abuse of power and technology at the expense of human individuality 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. In 1984, the main character Winston is shown as one who does not quite fit in with the rest of his society.

He has a continuous feeling in the back of his head that life as he knows it is not what it should be and begins writing in a journal about his thoughts, which is strictly illegal, "Winston saw that he had left the diary open on the table. Down with big brother' was written all over it" (Orwell, page 20). The society that Winston lives in is governed by the Inner Party, and ultimately by a figure referred to as Big Brother. No members of the society are allowed to speak out, or even think out against the government. Every house, building, street, and public place has something called a telescreen, which constantly monitors the people and each of their actions, speech, and even expressions.

If a person even appears to have a different thought than what they are mandated by Big Brother to have, this person will be arrested by the Thought Police and eventually vaporized. Orwell goes into great depth as to the advancement of the party's strategy against its enemies, "We do not merely destroy our enemies, we change them" (1984, 265). As the book progresses he becomes more aware of his individuality and eventually is unable to hide it and all the alienated characters come before some sort of hand of the government who is ready to rationalize the right and duty of the government to possess such control over its people.

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The novel attempts to instill in the reader a sincere fear of the loss of their individual freedoms as well as the ability of such a technologically advanced society to find deviants. Similarly in Fahrenheit 451, Montag becomes aware of problems with his society, but not logically or emotionally. He is deeply disturbed when a medical team that helps his wife appears and disappears within a matter of minutes: “ There are too many of us, he thought. There are billions of us and that’s too many.

Nobody knows anyone” (Fahrenheit 451, 14). Fahrenheit 451 accomplished a similar effect as Montag struggled to hide his guilt over the fact that he possessed books, which were illegal. His incrimination seems imminent as he notices many subtleties that suggest the authorities are onto him. These implications are especially apparent as he is complaining about the mechanical hound threatening him at the station – then makes the possible connection. “ Montag stood thinking of the ventilator grille at home and what lay behind the grille.

If someone here in the fire house knew about the ventilator then mightn’t they ‘ tell’ the Hound? ” (Fahrenheit 451, 25). Beatty, the fire chief in Fahrenheit 451 discovers Montag’s affinity for books. As a result, he explains that books were made illegal because they always offend somebody. The new society, as he explains, allows all people, rich and poor, stupid and smart to “ get a sense of motion without moving” (Fahrenheit 451, 56). In this sense, the diversion of otherwise competent people into useless tasks and past times is the particular concern and fear of the author.

The prime directive of all these ' utopias' is to pacify their public and either thrill them with the collective being of a nation, or sedate them with excitement and drugs. The popularity of these books does rule out the possibility of such a society coming into existence in the future, however. The state of people is not about to change, and their ignorance will continue regardless of the harshness of the wake up calls issued. An atmosphere of alienation is established by Bradbury in the opening scenes of Fahrenheit 451, which details a " fireman's" growing dissatisfaction with his conformist society.

Montag's, the lead character, pleasure in his work of burning books is quickly challenged in his conversation with his neighbor, Clarisse McClellan. As they walk home together, she asks Montag if he is happy. His first reaction is to tell himself that, of course, he is happy. After leaving her and wandering around inside his house looking for his wife, Montag answers Clarisse's question in the adverse when he discovers that his wife Mildred has taken an overdose of sleeping pills, his alienation is intensified.

Bradbury uses the roar of jets overhead as a counterpoint to Montag's scream, thus pitting his character's human sounds and feelings against the roaring sounds of technology. With the introduction of other mechanical devices, such as the equipment used on Mildred by the medics, the television parlors, and the Mechanical Hound, Montag's alienation from a society that has embraced mass culture and thoroughly discouraged individual thinking intensifies. In scene after scene, Montag becomes emotionally alienated from his work, his wife, and the people he works with.

As this alienation increases, he reaches out to books and to the people who value them. His escape from the city to the refuge of the book people offers hope. He has escaped the alienation of the mechanical society he left behind. Perhaps he will help establish a better one by remembering the words in the book he will commit to memory. The suggestion Bradbury makes is that by staying connected to books, which are a reflection of other people's thinking, we stay connected as human beings one to the other.

Books, then, are an antidote to alienation. Apathy and Passivity By portraying many characters as passive figures who never even wonder about their lot in life, Fahrenheit 451 seems to imply that apathy is a very important element in the decline of Montag's society Censorship and independent thought are also important concepts in our society today. These two ideals are constantly at odds against each other. The balance of these two concepts often determines the success or failure of a society.

Uncontrolled censorship in society never works to its advantage either. Modern Americans often think of inequality quite differently. They believe that the natural social order-the market place and the acquisitive talents of people operating in that marketplace-leads to undesirable inequalities, especially in economic power. The government the government should be powerful enough to restrain these natural tendencies and produce, by law, a greater degree of equality than society allows when left alone (Wilson 29).