

# [451 old and did not encourage the](https://assignbuster.com/451-old-and-did-not-encourage-the/)

451 And Brave New WorldFor more than half a century science fiction writers have thrilled andchallenged readers with visions of the future and future worlds. These authorsoffered an insight into what they expected man, society, and life to be like atsome future time. One such author, Ray Bradbury, utilized this concept in hiswork, Fahrenheit 451, a futuristic look at a man and his role in society. Bradbury utilizes the luxuries of life in America today, in addition to variousoccupations and technological advances, to show what life could be like if thefuture takes a drastic turn for the worse. He turns man’s best friend, the dog, against man, changes the role of public servants and changes the value of aperson.

Aldous Huxley also uses the concept of society out of control in hisscience fiction novel Brave New World. Written late in his career, Brave NewWorld also deals with man in a changed society. Huxley asks his readers to lookat the role of science and literature in the future world, scared that it may berendered useless and discarded. Unlike Bradbury, Huxley includes in his book agroup of people unaffected by the changes in society, a group that still hasreligious beliefs and marriage, things no longer part of the changed society, tocompare and contrast today’s culture with his proposed futuristic culture.

Butone theme that both Brave New World and Fahrenheit 451 use in common is thetheme of individual discovery by refusing to accept a passive approach to life, and refusing to conform. In addition, the refusal of various methods of escapefrom reality is shown to be a path to discovery. In Brave New World, the maincharacters of Bernard Marx and the “ Savage” boy John both come torealize the faults with their own cultures. In Fahrenheit 451 Guy Montag beginsto discover that things could be better in his society but, sue to someuncontrollable events, his discover happens much faster than it would have. Heis forced out on his own, away from society, to live with others like himselfwho think differently that the society does. Marx, from the civilized culture, seriously questions the lack of history that his society has. He also wonders asto the lack of books, banned because they were old and did not encourage the newculture.

By visiting a reservation, home of an “ uncivilized” cultureof savages, he is able to see first hand something of what life and society useto be like. Afterwards he returns and attempts to incorporate some of what hesaw into his work as an advertising agent. As a result with this contrast withthe other culture, Marx discovers more about himself as well. He is able to seemore clearly the things that had always set him on edge: the promiscuity, thedomination of the government and the lifelessness in which he lived. (Allen)John, often referred to as “ the Savage” because he was able to leavethe reservation with Marx to go to London to live with him, also has a hard timeadjusting to the drastic changes. The son of two members of the modern societybut born and raised on the reservation, John learned from his mother the valuesand the customs of the “ civilized” world while living in a culturethat had much different values and practices. Though his mother talked of thepromiscuity that she had practiced before she was left on the reservation (shewas accidentally left there while on vacation, much as Marx was) and did stillpractice it, John was raised, thanks to the people around him, with the beliefthat these actions were wrong.

Seeing his mother act in a manner that obviouslyreflected different values greatly affected and hurt John, especially when hereturned with Marx to London. John loved his mother, but he, a hybrid of the twocultures, was stuck in the middle. (May) These concepts, human reaction tochanges in their culture and questioning of these changes, are evidentthroughout the book. Huxley’s characters either conform to society’s demands foruniformity or rebel and begin a process of discovery; there are no people in themiddle. By doing so, Huxley makes his own views of man and society evident. Heshows that those who conform to the “ brave new world” become lesshuman, but those who actively question the new values of society discover truthabout the society, about themselves, and about people in general. An example ofthis is Huxley’s views of drugs as an escape. The conforming members of societyused widely a drug called soma, which induces hallucinations and escapes fromthe conscious world for two to eight hour periods.

Those very few who didn’t, John included, mainly did not because they thought the drug either unclean or aneasy escape, one not needed in a society aiming at making life very simple. Byrefusing to “ go along” in this escape from reality, John is ultimatelyable to break from society and define his own destiny. In Fahrenheit 451 GuyMontag, the main character, is able to see through the government and theofficial policies of his society. He does so by gradually beginning to questioncertain aspect of society which most simply accept as fact.

Montag’s job as afireman serves as a setting to show how many people passively accept theabsurdity of their society. Instead of rushing to put out fires, as firementoday do, Montag rushes to start fires, burning the books and homes of peoplereported to have books. This was considered by most people to be a respectableprofession. But on different occasions Montag took a book out of burning homesand would from time to time read them.

From this, he begins to to question thevalues of his society. Montag’s marriage also serves a setting to contrastpassive acceptance versus questioning of society’s values. His marriage is notthe happy kind that couples today experience but more like a coexistence. He andhis wife live together and he supports her, though he apparently neither lovesher a great deal or expects her to love him. This relationship and livingarrangement, with its lack of love, is Bradbury’s way of showing what life couldbe like if people not only stop communicating but stop thinking and choosing, thus loosing control over their lives.

Montag and his wife continue to livetogether though people in that situation today would not hesitate to terminatesuch a relationship. Montag’s wife apparently accepts this relationship becauseit is normal for the society in which she lives. (Wolfheim) Like Brave NewWorld\_characters escaping from reality through the use of soma, Montag’s wife, and many other characters, escape through watching a sophisticated form oftelevision. This television system covers three of the walls of the Montag’s TVroom (they can’t afford to buy the screen to cover the fourth wall), has acontrol unit that allows the watchers to interact with the characters on theprogram and another unit that inserts Mrs. Montag’s name into specific places, thus creating the image they the characters are actually conversing with them. Montag’s wife, having only a few friends and ones she rarely sees, spends muchof her day in this room, watching a program called “ The Family”, agovernment sponsored program that shows the viewers what life at home should belike. The problem with this is that Montag’s wife takes the program as asubstitute for reality. She is almost addicted to the program, much as peoplewere with soma in Brave New World.

Bradbury uses this television and it’sprograms as a way of showing the escape he is worried people will look for inthe future. Without actively questioning society’s values, he is concerned thatpeople will look for ways to idly spend their time. But like Marx, Montagchooses not to take part in this addiction. By abstaining, he can see theaffects it’s use has on the people around him, much as Marx and more importantlyJohn the Savage saw in their culture.

Both authors try to show that with lifemade easier by strong government control and a lack of personal involvementpeople will no longer spend their time thinking, questioning or developing theirown ideas. Through these various diversions from normal behavior in society, Marx, John the Savage and Guy Montag are able to see the truths behind thesocieties they live in and are able to learn about themselves. And though theirdiscoveries meant that their lives would be changed forever, the authorssucceeded in showing that the key to humanity lies in thinking and questioning. These men found themselves through their own discoveries, much as Bradbury andHuxley hope others will do.

BibliographyAllen, Walter The Modern Novel. Dutton, 1964 May, Keith M. Aldous Huxley.

Paul Elek Books Ltd., 1972 Wolfheim, Donald The Universe Makers. Harper and Row, 1971