

Fahrenheit 451

1 Ray Bradbury

- Was born on the 20th of August 1922 in Waukegan, Illinois
- Literary breakthrough with *The Martian Chronicles* (*The Silver Locusts*) in 1950, a collection of short stories about the destruction of an ideal society on Mars by American settlers
- Achieved international renown for *The Martian Chronicles*, *The Illustrated Man* and *Fahrenheit 451*
- Further works: Screen - plays, dramas, children' s books and poetry
- Died on the 5th of June 2012 in Los Angeles, California

→ Was influenced by Edgar Allan Poe

→ Achieved to make the Science Fiction genre literary respectable due to his high level of language and the wide range of topics addressed in his works

2 Plot Summary

The novel tells the story of Guy Montag, a fireman who lives in a fictional authoritarian American society where the possession of books is a crime. Instead of putting out fires, the duty of the firemen consists of burning any books which have been reported to them. Due to enlightening conversations with Clarisse McClellan, an eccentric teenager living next to Montag, he begins to question his life. Eventually he realizes that it is an illusion controlled by the government through constant influence of mass media providing futile information and mindless recreational activities. The death of Clarisse in a road accident and the suicide of a woman who was found in possession of books are the drastic events which induce him to take action against the government. With the help of Faber, a retired English professor, he plots to overthrow it. Montag starts hoarding books and during an emotional outburst, he reads out poetry to his wife Mildred and her friends, which leaves them confused and makes them report him. He is forced to burn down his house, kills his superior Captain Beatty and flees. In the end, the city he lives in is destroyed by an air raid and Montag joins intellectual outcasts who have given themselves the task to remember books and to relay their knowledge if their society changes.

3 Dystopian Novel

- Technological and scientific advance of humanity is questioned
- Description of a self - concious, inhumane society
- Popular examples: *Brave New World* (1932) by Aldous Huxley, *Fahrenheit 451* (1953) and *A Clockwork Orange* (1962) by Anthony Burgess
- Main traits: Conflict between asserters of the system and oppositional rebels who want to create an antipodal society, mostly in form of a nature idyll; radical change of character of the protagonist

4 Fahrenheit 451 - Science Fiction or the Future?

Possible Explanation for Bradburys chain of thoughts:

- Establishment and influence of mass media on the people
→ Uncontrolled flooding with information (→Sea shell radios, television parlours)
- Second Red Scare (McCarthy Era): Practice of making accusations of disloyalty, subversion, or treason without proper regard for evidence (→Mechanical Hound)