

### **Open Book, Open Mind.**

There is a story which shall never cease to exist within the walls of my mind: the story of Montag's internal and external strife in author Ray Bradbury's story of Fahrenheit 451. This story has changed my looking glass and touched my life deeply with lessons on the value of real knowledge, the nature of deep thinking, and the power to change.

Fahrenheit 451 interested me to begin with, but it wasn't until it taught me the meaning of real knowledge that I began to drink in every carefully transcribed word it had to offer. Bradbury's character, Captain Beatty, explained it best when he spoke about his own society's lack of 'real knowledge', which drew a picture very similar to our own society, "Give the people contests they win by remembering the words to more popular songs or the names of state capitals or how much corn Iowa grew last year. Cram them full of noncombustible data, chock them so damned full of 'facts' they feel stuffed, but absolutely 'brilliant' with information. Then they'll get a *sense* of motion without moving" (Page 61.) Beatty was speaking about people learning things, but things that are tame, useless bits of information that give no depth to anyone's character or personality; the information merely makes someone feel as if they have knowledge, without really gaining any insight. Fahrenheit 451 made me realize that it wasn't simply a matter of how much I read, but *what* I read. Moreover, it was important for me to find quality within the things that I learned, and to apply this quality to all aspects of my life. These days, I seek out things, books included, that will give me more identity, more sapience, and more

depth. Because of Fahrenheit 451, I seek out what I believe to be, 'real knowledge.'

Naturally, with all this new knowledge, all these new thoughts, I would have been quite lost if I had not learned another invaluable and subtle lesson from Fahrenheit 451: the nature of deep thinking. An influential example for me in the story is a discourse between the main character, named "Montag", and a supporting character, a wizened, intellectual man known as "Faber," which involves Faber explaining a key element that is missing from his society's forms of entertainment, which are similar to our own, but with the exception that books are recently banned. This discourse, so logically stunning and compelling to me that I have recited it in my mind countless times, begins with Faber stating that their forms of entertainment lack "leisure" (Page 84,) to which Montag replies in a confused manner, "Oh, but we've plenty of off-hours" (Page 84;) allowing Faber, on cue, to deliver his point by stating, "Off-hours, yes. But time to think? If you're not driving at a hundred miles an hour, at a clip where you can't think of anything else but the danger, then you're playing some game or sitting in some room where you can't argue with the four-wall televisor. Why? The televisor is 'real.' It is immediate, it has dimension. It tells you what to think and blasts it in. It *must* be right. It *seems* so right. It rushes you on so quickly to its own conclusions your mind hasn't time to protest, 'What nonsense!'" (Page 84) I sat, book in hand, with my mind pouring over how many times I had allowed something from a movie or television show to influence me, yet how often had I questioned the truth to it? When did I actually stop to consider what I was seeing? Definitely not when I would hastily hop from one piece of entertainment to another in my free time; not even when I entered a vehicle, because I was either focused on driving as

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fast as possible or listening to the radio, blind and deaf to all thought and reason. Any task that gave me the smallest amount of time to think, such as washing the dishes or showering, I would try to rush through and finish as quickly as possible, in order to return to my blissfully inarguable entertainment of course. However, upon finishing this book, I have slowed down my world; I let the minutes tick by, unconcerned if I have a few more moments to myself, a few more moments to be alone with my thoughts. This book has taught me that being alone, in my own thoughts, I can think clearly, and more importantly, I can think deeply.

The last major influence this book has had on my life is that it showed me how much we can change both ourselves, and the world. The main protagonist, Montag, endured a large amount of change, not just externally, but internally. At the beginning of the story he was upset and confused, he didn't know what he was doing or why anything was happening, and above all else, he was miserable on the inside. Furthermore, Montag's job was to burn books; however, the more he saw the books and their effects on people, the more he began to read them, until he secretly began reading every book of quality he could find. In the span of a single week of reading, he learned to recognize the flaws within himself and his marriage, he discovered new, real, friendships, and he risked everything in his life, including his life itself, to try and fix not just his own misery, but also the world's hidden misery. Montag's journey of change has shown me that as a human being, as a person, I can always change; I can always become whatever I want to or need to become; whatever may come, I will endure.

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Ray Bradbury's tale of Fahrenheit 451 has moved me with Montag's journey, and I will never let myself forget my quest for real knowledge, the chances I have to think deeply, or my ability to change my life and the lives of those around me.