

The ability to read is a fundamental life skill. Reading can also be one of the most rewarding and pleasurable activities in which we engage. With guidance from the Learning Commons and our English/Language Arts departments, MCA has set a goal to encourage students to appreciate and enjoy quality literature and reading. As such, during the summer, students are given one book at each grade level that all are required to read and review. Please see below for your specific assignment. Happy reading!

- I. Welcome to English 10! In English 10, each student will gain practical skills in critical thinking and expression, while gaining an appreciation for American and other literature and a deeper understanding of the place they hold in our culture and the importance to us as Christians. In addition, this course will offer students a variety of ways in which they can improve their reading, writing, spelling, punctuation, speaking, and listening skills.
- II. This summer you will be reading *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury. **Before you read** the book, read “Introduction to *Fahrenheit 451* by Neil Gaiman” written in 2013 (attached below). Complete the questions that follow the essay to prepare for the discussion in the fall.
- III. Read *Fahrenheit 451*. For more insight into the inventions mentioned in the book, please review the attached infographic and follow the link below to more information. Pairing audio with the novel is encouraged because Bradbury uses metaphor to describe many items that had not yet been invented. The audio adds one more layer of understanding to the novel. Be sure to read the text along with the audio. The graded discussion will take place and a test on the book will be given the first week of the school year.
- IV. **As you read**, complete the attached Reading Check to use for discussion. The Reading Check will be collected.

NOTE: Mrs. Eibes has a limited number of copies of *Fahrenheit 451*. See her **BEFORE** summer begins to borrow a copy. First come, first served.

ESSAY by Neil Gaiman, 2013

Introduction to *Fahrenheit 451* by Neil Gaiman, 2013

Sometimes writers write about a world that does not yet exist. We do it for a hundred reasons. (Because it's good to look forward, not back. Because we need to illuminate a path we hope or we fear humanity will take. Because the world of the future seems more enticing or more interesting than the world of today. Because we need to warn you. To encourage. To examine. To imagine.) The reasons for writing about the day after tomorrow, and all the tomorrows that follow it, are as many and as varied as the people writing.

This is a book of warning. It is a reminder that what we have is valuable, and that sometimes we take what we value for granted.

There are three phrases that make possible writing about the world of not-yet (you can call it science fiction or speculative fiction; you can call it anything you wish) and they are simple phrases: *What if...? If only...? If this goes on...*

“What if...?” gives us change, a departure from our lives (*What if aliens landed tomorrow and gave us everything we wanted, but at a price?*)

“If only...” lets us explore the glories and dangers of tomorrow. (*If only dogs could talk. If only I were invisible.*)

“If this goes on...” is the most predictive of the three, although it doesn't try to predict an actual future with all its messy confusion. Instead, “If this goes on...” fiction takes an element of life today, something clear and obvious and normally something troubling, and asks what would happen if that thing, that one thing, became bigger, became all-pervasive, changed the way we thought and behaved. (*If this goes on, all communication everywhere will be through text messages or computers, and direct speech between two people, without a machine, will be outlawed.*)

People think—wrongly—that speculative fiction is about predicting the future, but it isn't; or if it is, it tends to do a rotten job of it. Futures are huge things that come with many elements and a billion variables, and the human race has a habit of listening to predictions for what the future will bring and then doing something quite different.

What speculative fiction is really good at is not the future but the present—taking an aspect of it that troubles or is dangerous, and extending and extrapolating that aspect into something that allows the people of that time to see what they are doing from a different angle and from a different place. It's cautionary.

Fahrenheit 451 is speculative fiction. It's an “If this goes on...” story. Ray Bradbury was writing about his present, which is our past. He was warning us about things; some of those things are obvious, and some of them, half a century later, are harder to see.

More than half a century has passed since 1953. In America in 1953, the comparatively recent medium of radio was already severely on the wane—its reign had lasted about thirty years, but now the exciting new medium of television had come into ascendancy, and the dramas and comedies of radio were either ending for good or reinventing themselves with a visual track on the “idiot box.”

The news channels in America warned of juvenile delinquents—teenagers in cars who drove dangerously and lived for kicks. The Cold War was going on—a war between Russia and its allies and America and its allies in which nobody dropped bombs or fired bullets because a dropped bomb could tip the world into a Third World War, a nuclear

Maranatha Christian Academy
Summer Reading 2026 (entering grade 10)

war from which it would never return. The senate was holding hearings to root out hidden Communists and taking steps to stamp out comic books. And whole families were gathering around the television in the evenings.

“If this goes on...” thought Ray Bradbury, “nobody will read books anymore,” and *Fahrenheit 451* began. He had written a short story once called “The Pedestrian,” about a man who is incarcerated by the police after he is stopped simply for walking. That story became part of the world he was building, and seventeen-year-old Clarisse McLellan becomes a pedestrian in a world where nobody walks.

He called the Los Angeles fire department and asked them at what temperature paper burned. Fahrenheit 451, somebody told him. He had his title. It didn’t matter if it was true or not.

The book was published and acclaimed. People loved the book, and they argued about it. It was a novel about censorship, they said, about mind control, about humanity. About government control of our lives. About books.

I read *Fahrenheit 451* as a boy: I did not understand Guy Montag, did not understand why he did what he did, but I understood the love of books that drove him. The huge wall-screen televisions were as futuristic and implausible as the idea that people on the television would talk to me, that I could play that part if I had a script.

When I reread it as a teenager, *Fahrenheit 451* had become a book about independence, about thinking for yourself. It was about treasuring books and the dissent inside the covers of books. It was about how we as humans begin by burning books and end by burning people.

Rereading it as an adult, I find myself marveling at the book once more. It is all of those things, yes, but it is also a period piece. The four-wall television being described is the television of the 1950’s: variety shows with symphony orchestras and low-brow comedians, and soap operas. The world of fast-driving, crazy teenagers out for kicks, of an endless cold war that sometimes goes hot, of wives who appear to have no jobs or identities save for their husbands’, of bad men being chased by hounds (even mechanical hounds) is a world that feels like it has its roots firmly in the 1950’s.

A young reader finding this book today, or the day after tomorrow, is going to have to imagine first a past, and then a future that belongs to that past. But still, the heart of the book remains untouched, and the questions Bradbury raises remain as valid and important.

Why do we need the things in books? The poems, the essays, the stories? Authors disagree. Authors are human and fallible and foolish. Stories are lies after all, tales of people who never existed and the things that never actually happened to them. Why should we read them? Why should we care?

Ideas—written ideas—are special. They are the way we transmit our stories and our thoughts from one generation to the next. If we lose them, we lose our shared history. We lose much of what makes us human. And fiction gives us empathy: it puts us inside the minds of other people, gives us the gift of seeing the world through their eyes. Fiction is a lie that tells us true things.

I knew Ray Bradbury for the last thirty years of his life, and I was so lucky. He was funny and gentle and always (even at the end, when he was so old he was blind and wheelchair-bound, even then) enthusiastic. I love how his definition of a book is at the end, when he points out that we should not judge our books by their covers, and that some books exist between covers that are perfectly people-shaped.

Introduction to *Fahrenheit 451* by Neil Gaiman Analysis

1. According to Neil Gaiman, what was the purpose of *Fahrenheit 451*?
2. *Fahrenheit 451* is commonly placed in the “speculative fiction” genre. In your own words, what is speculative fiction?
3. Neil Gaiman refers to three phrases that “make possible writing about the world of not-yet.” Which phrase best describes *Fahrenheit 451*?
4. “*In America in 1953, the comparatively recent medium of radio was already severely on the wane-its reign has lasted about thirty years, but now the exciting new medium of television has come into ascendancy...*”
What does this quote, found on lines 33-35, tell you about the views of television and radio at the time period?

Ray Bradbury Predictions Fulfilled

Sixty years ago, the great science fiction author predicted the appearance of various devices, which have now become commonplace

Bradbury's predictions

SHORT STORY "THE VELDT"



VIRTUAL REALITY ROOM
"The walls were blank and two dimensional. Now, as George and Lydia Hadley stood in the center of the room, the walls began to purr and recede into crystalline distance, it seemed, and presently an African veldt appeared, in three dimensions, on all sides, in color reproduced to the final pebble and bit of straw ..."

SHORT STORY "THERE WILL COME SOFT RAINS" AND OTHER WORKS



AUTOMATED HOME
The technically impeccable home continues to care for its owners even after they have been killed in a nuclear war

SHORT STORY "THE MURDERER"



WRIST RADIO
"When it wasn't music, it was inter-office communications, and my horror chambers of a radio wrist watch on which my friends and my wife phoned every five minutes."

NOVEL "FAHRENHEIT 451"



SEASHELL RADIOS
"And in her ears the little Seashells, the thimble radios tamped tight ..."



WALL TV
"It'll be even more fun when we can afford to have the fourth wall installed. How long you figure before we save up and get the fourth wall torn out and a wall-TV put in?"



OMNIPRESENT ELECTRONIC SURVEILLANCE
"Tonight, this network is proud to have the opportunity to follow the Hound by camera helicopter as it starts on its way to the target ..."



ROUND THE CLOCK BANK SERVICES
"Montag walked from the subway with the money in his pocket (he had visited the bank, which was open all night every night with robot tellers in attendance) ..."

Real equivalents



SPY SATELLITES, STREET VIDEO SURVEILLANCE

1960s

Beginning of common use, date



AUTOMATIC TELLER MACHINES

1980s



CELL PHONE

1983



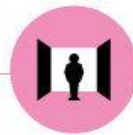
EAR-BUD EARPHONES

1990



"SMART HOME" CONCEPT

1990s



VIRTUAL REALITY ROOM

1992



LARGE FLAT-SCREEN TVS

1997

***Fahrenheit 451* Reading Checks**

Part I

1. In the opening scene, why are the books compared to birds?
2. Why does the author introduce the character of Clarisse before Mildred?
3. Why are all the houses fireproof in this society?
4. Why did Mildred require emergency service? What service was provided?
5. What is the mechanical hound and what is its purpose?
6. Why does the society consider Clarisse “anti-social”?
7. When the woman’s house is raided, why does she light the match?
8. Describe the relationship between Montag and Mildred.
9. What is the purpose of Beatty’s visit?
10. Why does Montag feel “fat”?

Part II

1. In the scene where Mildred and Montag read books together, what are their separate reactions?
2. What is the effect throughout Parts I and Parts II of the bombers flying over?
3. Who is Professor Faber?

4. Montag's reaction to the commercial on the subway is a turning point in his life. How does he react and why?
5. What argument does Faber make for books?
6. What is the "small green metal object"?
7. What does the White Clown show lead you to believe about television programming in this society?
8. Why does Mrs. Phelps cry when Montag reads "Dover Beach"?
9. What is Montag's destination at the end of Part II? Why?

Part III

1. This section is very revealing of Beatty's character. What is revealed?
2. What major event coincides with Montag's escape? In what ways are the two related?
3. How does Montag foil the hound?
4. What is the purpose of the long description of the river, the woods, and the sky?
5. What purpose do the inhabitants of the wilderness have for their lives?
6. Why does the book end as it does?