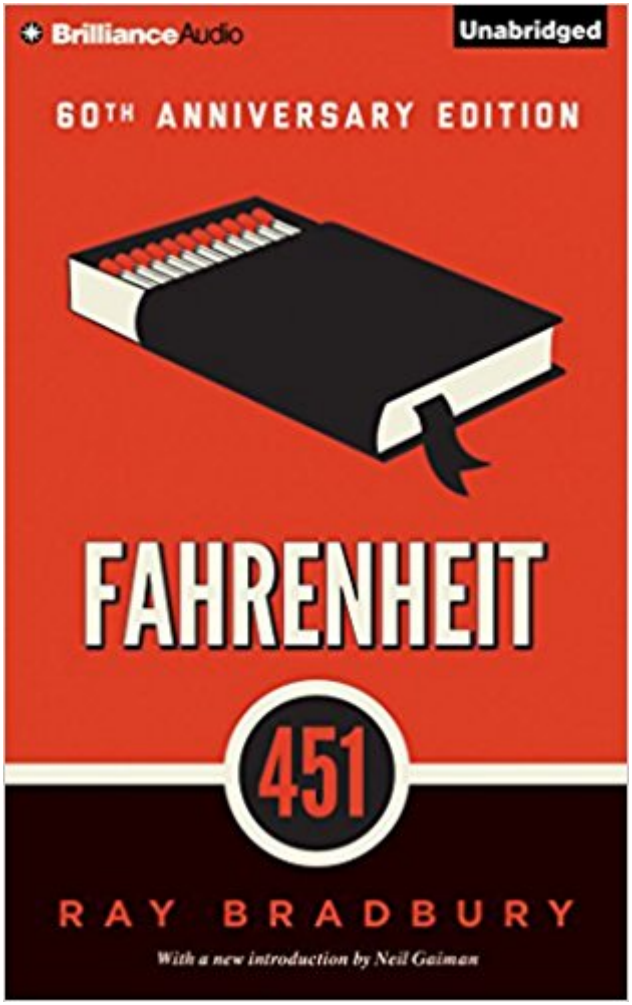
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Fahrenheit 451: A Novel



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Synopsis

Ray Bradbury’s internationally acclaimed novel Fahrenheit 451 is a masterwork of 20th-century literature set in a bleak, dystopian future, narrated here by Academy Award-winning actor Tim Robbins.Guy Montag is a fireman. In his world, where television rules and literature is on the brink of extinction, firemen start fires rather than put them out. His job is to destroy the most illegal of commodities, the printed book, along with the houses in which they are hidden. Montag never questions the destruction and ruin his actions produce, returning each day to his bland life and wife, Mildred, who spends all day with her television "family." But then he meets an eccentric young neighbor, Clarisse, who introduces him to a past where people didnÃ¢â ¬â„¢t live in fear and to a present where one sees the world through the ideas in books instead of the mindless chatter of television. When Mildred attempts suicide and Clarisse suddenly disappears, Montag begins to question everything he has ever known. He starts hiding books in his home, and when his pilfering is discovered, the fireman has to run for his life.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In Fahrenheit 451, Ray Bradbury’s classic, frightening vision of the future, firemen don’t put out fires--they start them in order to burn books. Bradbury’s vividly painted society holds up the appearance of happiness as the highest goal--a place where trivial information is good, and knowledge and ideas are bad. Fire Captain Beatty explains it this way, "Give the people contests they win by remembering the words to more popular songs.... Don’t give them slippery stuff like philosophy or sociology to tie things up with. That way lies melancholy." Guy Montag is a

book-burning fireman undergoing a crisis of faith. His wife spends all day with her television "family," imploring Montag to work harder so that they can afford a fourth TV wall. Their dull, empty life sharply contrasts with that of his next-door neighbor Clarisse, a young girl thrilled by the ideas in books, and more interested in what she can see in the world around her than in the mindless chatter of the tube. When Clarisse disappears mysteriously, Montag is moved to make some changes, and starts hiding books in his home. Eventually, his wife turns him in, and he must answer the call to burn his secret cache of books. After fleeing to avoid arrest, Montag winds up joining an outlaw band of scholars who keep the contents of books in their heads, waiting for the time society will once again need the wisdom of literature. Bradbury--the author of more than 500 short stories, novels, plays, and poems, including The Martian Chronicles and The Illustrated Man--is the winner of many awards, including the Grand Master Award from the Science Fiction Writers of America. Readers ages 13 to 93 will be swept up in the harrowing suspense of Fahrenheit 451, and no doubt will join the hordes of Bradbury fans worldwide. --Neil Roseman --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Starred Review. After years of working as a fireman--one who burns books and enjoys his work--Guy Montag meets a young girl who makes him question his profession and the values of the society in which he lives. Stephan Hoye’s narration is perfectly matched to the subject matter: his tone is low and ominous, and his cadence shifts with the prose to ratchet up tension and suspense. He produces spot-on voices, and his versions of the gruff Captain Beatty, the playful Clarisse, and the fearful professor Faber are especially impressive. A Ballantine paperback. (Aug.) (c) Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

In a future society, books are forbidden and "firemen" responsible for burning the remaining titles. That’s the job of one Guy Montag, but he begins to question his role as he gets in contact with a teenager who reads secretly. And he becomes himself a criminal reader of smuggled books.The most surprising thing about Fahrenheit 451 is that it’s premise could, in the hands of a lesser writer, easily turn a condescending little lesson about the importance of reading books. But like any work of art that would be missed if it was burned, Fahrenheit 451 doesn’t want to give you answers. The book wants you to ask questions.The main point for me is not that books are burned. That is only the most dramatic side of something bigger: that society allows them to be burned, and that no one is interested in reading in the first place. The only sources of distraction for the denizens of Fahrenheit 451 are sports or soap operas in televisions the size of entire walls. The speed of

television does not allow you to stop and think, just swallow that entertainment loaf. From this insipid entertainment are born people who literally talk to the walls and a society unable to question.Montag’s wife, Mildred is one example. She can’t talk about anything other than the soaps or what threatens her financial security. She is a cattle-person, described as having an invisible cataract behind her pupils, afraid of anything different, incapable of thinking or feeling without directions from the TV or authorities. Montag discovers how they can’t connect to one another because in the end they don’t know their own history. And without that knowledge you can’t even know who you are, or what you want.Today is 2015, and the society described in Fahrenheit 451 seems even more palpable than when the book was written in 1953. The internet shortens our attention span towards shorter and simpler texts and videos. More than ever we more intelligent - we have access to an ocean of information literally at our finger tips - but we are not wise. We don’t know what to do with our information.And we have no memory. The social media timelines dictate the discussion of the day, what funny video is trending, what news we should be disgusted with, what meme will be the big joke for a day or two before it is once again forgotten. Fahrenheit 451 even reminds us of the "mass society judgments" that lead to self-censorship.I believe reading is fundamentally important for wisdom, more than any other art form. Reading is solitary work. It demands silence, and to let your ideas absorb the author’s, contest them, accept or adapt. Fahrenheit 451 says that you can’t make others think, but I believe it comes with a good recipe for wisdom: "Number one, like I said, is quality of information. Number two: time to digest. And number three: the right to conduct your actions based on what we learn from the two previous items."

For me, Fahrenheit 451 more than deserves its place among the top five on my ’Absolute Best Books Ever’ list. How anyone who has actually carefully digested it could possibly give it less than five out of five stars is quite beyond me. But to each his own, I do suppose. And really good books don’t always have to satisfy absolutely everyone, to have the lasting effect that this particular one has most certainly had.What more to say? Well, for starters, judging by Fahrenheit 451 alone, Ray Bradbury was nothing short of a literary genius, and it’s a truly invaluable thing that he gifted future generations with a yarn so exquisitely told. Full of thought provoking contradictions, like the bizarre dystopian future it depicts, the author’s narrative alternates between being complicated and deceptively simplistic in its approach, yet is somehow still equal parts subtle and heavy handed in just the right measure when necessary.For example, the premise itself, that one dark day, in a potentially dark future, firemen will burn books, homes and even people, instead of preserving and protecting them, might seem absurd if Bradbury didn’t handle the material with such seemingly

effortless brilliance. So much so, that the reader’s natural inclination towards disbelief is subordinated to such a profound degree, that before you know it, you’re seeing shades of genuine fascism in the Firemen, and in all of the chief antagonist’s perverted banter, that turns the concepts of equality and justice upside down and backwards, and may actually leave one wondering how much of what Captain Beatty says is really something to think ever so deeply about.And the implications of the totalitarian future Bradbury presents really is troubling. Even scary. But that frightful roller coaster of inverted thought patterns and potential future realities is what makes Fahrenheit 451 work so astoundingly well. But is that really the precise temperature at which paper ignites and bursts into flame? How incredibly irrelevant! The real point is that few other works of imaginative fiction have done such a superb job of giving readers so very much to think about while reading so precious few pages.Sure, the book isn’t especially long, but does it really have to be? It’s true. In pretty short order Bradbury introduces his suddenly shell shocked to true life protagonist, and the ill fated young muse who breathes new life in him. It all seems so mundane at first, but then the author takes us into Montag’s home, all through his workplace, and then out and about, into a frighteningly macabre, yet antiseptically stale and deathly whited sepulcher of an urban futurescape, where the meaning of literacy itself is under full scale attack. And once we’ve seen all that, what more is there really to know, but how is it all going to end?And since Bradbury’s cautionary tale is all about burning anything incongruous or even potentially "antisocial" in society to indistinct, untraceable ash, all that is left after we’ve seen how bleak and twisted what has become of the American founding fathers’ original quest for equality and the pursuit of happiness, is to take the plunge into the author’s masterful ending, that, despite its apocalyptic overtones, actually ends up becoming a whole new beginning for mankind. And for goodness sake, people, how could anyone ask for anything more from one of the greatest achievements of one of the finest science fiction authors ever?

This was written as a novel back in the early 1950s, back when television was young. The passage of time has turned it into a prophecy about the influence of television on the ideology of whole societies. In the 1950s it was fantasy; in the twenty-first century it is a grim reality, with television as the main means of formation of public opinion, and little input from real public debate or reading apart from mere pass-time reading. In the novel’s fictional society where book are destroyed, the protagonist is one designated to memorise the book of Ecclesiastes so that it can be transmitted to subsequent generations. But there are other hints of Ecclesiastes in the book. It is interesting to see how the tide of opinion has turned against this book; it has touched a nerve; people don’t like the

book, especially now when the scenario in it is being played out. It is still worth reading, for these reasons. What hasn't changed, though, is the fact that it is well written and hangs together as entertainment, too.

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