

THE SKYLARK AND THE FROGS

Your first example of dystopian writing...enjoy!

There was once a society of frogs that lived at the bottom of a deep, dark well, from which nothing whatsoever could be seen of the world outside. They were ruled over by a great Boss Frog, a fearful bully who claimed, on rather dubious grounds, to own the well and all that crept or crawled therein. The Boss Frog never did a lick of work to feed or keep himself, but lived off the labors of the several bottom-dog frogs with whom he shared the well. They, wretched creatures, spent all the hours of their lightless days and a good many more of their lightless nights drudging about in the damp and slime to find the tiny grubs and mites on which the Boss Frog fattened.

Now, occasionally an eccentric skylark would flutter down into the well and would sing to the frogs of all the marvelous things it had seen in its journeyings in the great world outside: of the sun and the moon and the stars, of the sky-climbing mountains and fruitful valleys and the vast stormy seas, and of what it was like to adventure the boundless space above them.

Whenever the skylark came visiting, the Boss Frog would instruct the bottom-dog frogs to attend closely to all the bird had to tell. "For he is telling you," the Boss Frog would explain, "of the happy land wither all good frogs go for their reward when they finish this life of trials." Secretly, however, the Boss Frog thought this strange bird was quite mad.

Perhaps the bottom-dog frogs had once been deceived by what the Boss Frog told them. But with time they had grown cynical about such fairy tales as skylarks had to tell, and had reached the conclusion also that the lark was more than a little mad. Moreover, they had been convinced by certain free-thinking frogs among them (though who can say where these free—thinkers come from?) that this bird was being used by the Boss Frog to comfort and distract them with tales of pie in the sky which you get when you die. "And that's a lie!" the bottom-dog frogs bitterly croaked.

But there was among the bottom-dog frogs a philosopher frog who had invented a new and quite interesting idea about the skylark. "What the lark says is not exactly a lie," the philosopher frog suggested. "Nor is it madness. What the lark is really telling us about in its own queer way is the beautiful place we might make of this unhappy well of ours if only we set our minds to it. When the lark sings of sun and moon, it means the wonderful new forms of illumination we might introduce to dispel the darkness we live in. When it sings of the wide and windy skies, it means the healthful ventilation we should be enjoying instead of the dank and fetid airs we have grown accustomed to. When it sings of growing giddy with its dizzy swooping through the heavens, it means the delights of the liberated senses we should all know if we were not forced to waste ourselves in oppressive drudgery. Most important, when it sings of soaring wild and unfettered among the stars, it means the freedom we shall all have when the chains of the Boss frog are removed from our backs forever. So you see: the bird is not to be scorned. Rather, it should be appreciated and praised for bestowing on us an inspiration that emancipates us from despair.

Thanks to the philosopher frog, the bottom-dog frogs came to have a new and affectionate view of the skylark. In fact, when the revolution finally came (for revolutions always do come), the bottom-dog frogs even inscribed the image of the skylark on the banners and, marched to the barricades doing the best they could in their croaking way to imitate the bird's lyrical tunes. Following the Boss Frog's overthrow, the once dark, dank well was magnificently illuminated and ventilated and made a much more comfortable place to live. In addition, the frogs experienced a new and gratifying leisure with many attendant delights of the senses - even as the philosopher frog had foretold.

But still the eccentric skylark would come visiting with tales of the sun and the moon and the stars, of mountains and valleys and seas, and of grand winged adventure it had known.

'Perhaps,' conjectured the philosopher frog, "this bird is mad, after all. Surely we have no further need of these cryptic songs. And in any case, it is very tiresome to have to listen to fantasies when the fantasies have lost their social relevance."

So one day the frogs contrived to capture the lark. And upon so doing, they stuffed it and put it in their newly built civic (admission-free) museum in a place of honor.

Skylark and the Frogs

After reading the story again, answer the following questions as thoroughly as possible.

Define:

Parable:

Utopia:

***Dystopia:**

1. What does this parable say about utopias?
2. Why do the frogs listen to the skylark?
3. Why do they stop listening?
4. What idea might the skylark represent/symbolize?
5. Who are the frogs?
6. Is the frogs' world better after the skylark comes? How?
7. Why did the skylark think it wasn't the best?
8. Why did the frogs kill the skylark and stuff it for display?
9. Explain a parallel situation to this that exists in our world now (or in the past).
10. What could this say about religion and the way some people view it? (Use the back, if necessary)

F451 Happiness Pre-Discussion Questions

Answer the following questions as thoughtfully as possible, take note of how much blank space you are given to respond.

1. Is happiness a matter of choice? Explain your answer.
2. Can happiness be changed by outside forces? How?
3. Can outside forces—like the **government**—guarantee happiness?
4. In the novel, Fahrenheit 451, how does the government try to ensure happiness? Does it work?
5. Thinking about your answer to question 4, how would you go about trying to make people happy if given the power?

What's Important? Quote Analysis

In your groups, take a moment to reread your assigned section of *The Hearth and Salamander*. When you finish, answer the following questions as thoroughly as possible and write your final copy on poster paper for the class to study from.

1. What's going on in your scene? What's the gist?

"In the scene where Montag..."

2. Select the most important quotation from your scene and write it below using MLA format.

"It was a pleasure to burn" (Bradbury 1).

3. Why is this quote important? What do we learn? How does it advance the story?

"This inner dialogue shows us that..."

4. Anything that may help the class prepare for the test:

"The mechanical hound is a metaphor for..."

"This scene has a good example of foreshadowing when..."

Group Assignments

The important scenes of part I sectioned for you.

Group 1: Montag and Clarisse (6-10)

Group 2: Montag discovering Mildred (11-18)

Group 3: Montag and Mildred (18-21)

Group 4: Montag and Clarisse #2 (21-24)

Group 5: Montag and Beatty (24-28)

Group 6: Montag and Clarisse #3 (28-31)

Group 7: Montag and Old Woman (36-39)

Group 8: Montag and Mildred #2 (42-48)

Group 9: Montag and Mildred #3 (48-52)

Everyone: Montag and Beatty (52-68)

The Montag & Beatty Conversation of Amazing Importance

Read the following quotations that reflect Captain Beatty's ideas of happiness. ***Agree or disagree that his definitions apply to present-day America. Defend your point of view by finding specific examples from our culture to dispute or agree with his views.***

"And because [books] had mass, they became simpler," said Beatty. "Once, books appealed to a few people...They could afford to be different...But then the world got full of eyes and elbows and mouths...Films and radios, magazines, books leveled down to a sort of pastepudding norm..."

"People want to be happy, isn't that right?...Haven't you heard it all your life? Well, aren't they? Don't we keep them moving, don't we give them fun? That's all we live for, right? For pleasure, for titillation?"

"We're the Happiness Boys...We stand against the small tide of those who want to make everyone unhappy with conflicting theory and thought."

"If the government is inefficient, topheavy, and tax-mad, better it be all those than have people worry over it...Give the people contests they win by remembering the words to more popular songs or the names of state capitals...Cram them full of noncombustible data, chock them so full of 'facts' they feel stuffed, but absolutely 'brilliant' with information."

"Colored people don't like Little Black Sambo. Burn it. White people don't feel good about Uncle Tom's Cabin. Burn it. Someone's written a book on tobacco and cancer of the lungs? The cigarette people are weeping? Burn the book. Serenity, Montag. Peace, Montag. Take your fight outside."

"Books cut shorter. Condensations. Digests. Tabloids. Everything boils down the gag, the snap ending. Classics cut to fifteen-minute radio shows, then cut again to fill a two-minute book column, winding up at last as a ten—or twelve—line dictionary resume...Hamlet in a one-page digest in a book that claimed: now at last you can read all the classics; keep up with your neighbors. Do you see? Out of the nursery and into the college and back to the nursery; there's your intellectual pattern for the past five centuries or more."

Little Red Riding Hood: A Politically Correct Fairy Tale

by Jim Garner

There once was a young person named Red Riding Hood who lived with her mother on the edge of a large wood. One day her mother asked her to take a basket of fresh fruit and mineral water to her grandmother's house -- not because this was womyn's work, mind you, but because the deed was generous and helped engender a feeling of community. Furthermore, her grandmother was not sick, but rather was in full physical and mental health and was fully capable of taking care of herself as a mature adult.

So Red Riding Hood set off with her basket of food through the woods. Many people she knew believed that the forest was a foreboding and dangerous place and never set foot in it. Red Riding Hood, however, was confident...

On her way to Grandma's house, Red Riding Hood was accosted by a Wolf, who asked her what was in her basket. She replied, "Some healthful snacks for my grandmother, who is certainly capable of taking care of herself as a mature adult."

The Wolf said, "You know, my dear, it isn't safe for a little girl to walk through these woods alone."

Red Riding Hood said, "I find your sexist remark offensive in the extreme, but I will ignore it because of your traditional status as an outcast from society, the stress of which has caused you to develop your own, entirely valid worldview. Now, if you'll excuse me, I must be on my way."

Red Riding Hood walked on along the main path. But, because his status outside society had freed him from slavish adherence to linear, Western-style thought, the Wolf knew of a quicker route to Grandma's house. He burst into the house and ate Grandma, an entirely valid course of action for a carnivore such as himself. Then, unhampered by rigid, traditionalist notions of what was masculine or feminine, he put on grandma's nightclothes and crawled into bed.

Red Riding Hood entered the cottage and said, "Grandma, I have brought you some fat-free, sodium-free snacks to salute you in your role of a wise and nurturing matriarch."

From the bed, the Wolf said softly, "Come closer, child, so that I might see you."

Red Riding Hood said, "Oh, I forgot you are as optically challenged as a bat. Grandma, what big eyes you have!"

"They have seen much, and forgiven much, my dear."

"Grandma, what a big nose you have -- only relatively, of course, and certainly attractive in its own way."

"It has smelled much, and forgiven much, my dear."

"Grandma, what big teeth you have!"

The Wolf said, "I am happy with and what I am," and leaped out of bed. He grabbed Red Riding Hood in his claws, intent on devouring her. Red Riding Hood screamed, not out of alarm at the Wolf's apparent tendency toward cross-dressing, but because of his willful invasion of her personal space.

Her screams were heard by a passing woodchopper-person (or log-fuel technician, as he preferred to be called). When he burst into the cottage, he saw the melee and tried to intervene. But as he raised his ax, Red Riding and the Wolf both stopped.

"And what do you think you're doing?" asked Red Riding Hood.

The woodchopper-person blinked and tried to answer, but no words came to him.

"Bursting in here like a Neanderthal, trusting your weapon to do your thinking for you!" she said. "Sexist! Speciesist! How dare you assume that womyn and wolves can't solve their own problems without a man's help!"

When she heard Red Riding Hood's speech, Grandma jumped out of the mouth, took the woodchopper-person's axe, and cut his head off. After this ordeal, Red Riding Hood, Grandma, and the Wolf felt a certain commonality of purpose. They decided to set up an alternative household based on mutual respect and cooperation, and they lived together in the woods happily ever after.

Politically Correct Red Riding Hood

Use the story to answer the following questions as completely as possible.

1. List three examples of political correctness in the story.

1—

2—

3—

2. Explain how your three examples above are used to make the story politically correct. What would it have been like in the story's original form?

1—

2—

3—

3. What is the overall effect of this political correctness in the story? What does it do?

4. Lastly, what connections can you make between this story and *Fahrenheit 451*?

Fahrenheit 451 Censorship Project

Your assignment is to create an underground, grassroots advertising campaign to gain public support for banning a **children's book** of your choice.

Things to remember:

- **NO POSTERS!** I hated them as a student, and I hate the thought of you having to do them.
- **Create a visual** that is powerful and convincing—think of the “Truth” TV ads.
- **Include text** that explains the dangers—this could be fine print, or as bold as “GOT MILK?”
- Submissions should be turned in on **8x11 paper** (computer), or construction paper.

As you brainstorm: Imagine that you and your team are about to hit the streets of D.C. and plaster every bus stop, telephone poll, and mailbox with your ads—would it be edgy or shocking enough to stop even the most skeptical city-goer and make them find out more?

Other Notes and Ideas

Part II: The First Sentence You Ever Read

What does the sentence mean to you?

"It is computed that eleven thousand persons have at several times suffered death rather than submit to break their eggs at the smaller end."

"We cannot tell the precise moment when friendship is formed. As in filling a vessel drop by drop, there is at last a drop which makes it run over; so in a series of kindnesses there is at last one which makes the heart run over."

Why does Ray Bradbury include these specific allusions? Take note of the space you have:

Daedalus

By Thrice

I stand on the cliffs with my son next to me
This island our prison, our home
And everyday we look out at the sea
This place is all he's ever known

But I've got a plan and some wax and some string;
some feathers I stole from the birds
We leap from the cliff and we hear the wind
sing a song that's too perfect for words

But son, please keep a steady wing
And know you're the only one that means anything to me
Steer clear of the sun, or you'll find yourself in the sea

Now safely away, I let out a cry
"We'll make the mainland by noon"
But Icarus climbs higher still in the sky
Maybe I've spoken too soon

Oh son, please keep a steady wing
And know you're the only one that means anything to me
Steer clear of the sun, or you'll find yourself in the sea
Won't you look at your wings
They're coming undone
They're splitting at the seams
Steer clear of the sun, for once won't you listen to me?

O, Gods!
Why is this happening to me?
All I wanted was a new life for my son to grow up free
And now you took the only thing that meant anything to me
I will never fly again, I will hang up my wings

O, Gods!
Why is this happening to me?
All I wanted was a new life for my son to grow up free
And now you took the only thing that meant anything to me
I will never fly again, I will hang up my wings!

Excerpt from "The Melting Point of Wax"

By Thrice

Parody of an angel
Miles above the sea
I hear the voice of reason
Screaming after me
"You've flown far too high boy now you're too close to the sun,
Soon your makeshift wings will come undone"

Further Discussion

Why does Beatty use this popular allusion? What point is he trying to prove?

How do you think Beatty understands how to use these allusions?

Dover Beach (1851)

Matthew Arnold (1822-1888)

The sea is calm to-night.
The tide is full, the moon lies fair
Upon the straits; on the French coast the light
Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand;
Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.
Come to the window, sweet is the night-air!
Only, from the long line of spray
Where the sea meets the moon-blanch'd land,
Listen! you hear the grating roar
Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling,
At their return, up the high strand,
Begin, and cease, and then again begin,
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring
The eternal note of sadness in.

Sophocles long ago
Heard it on the Agæan, and it brought
Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow
Of human misery; we
Find also in the sound a thought,
Hearing it by this distant northern sea.

The Sea of Faith
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled.
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
Retreating, to the breath
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world.

Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! For the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

Further Discussion

Why does Mrs. Phelps have such a strong reaction to this poem?

The Book of Ecclesiastes

Chapter 1

The words of David's son, Qoheleth, king in Jerusalem:

Vanity of vanities, says Qoheleth, vanity of vanities! All things are vanity!

What profit has man from all the labor which he toils at under the sun?

One generation passes and another comes, but the world forever stays.

The sun rises and the sun goes down; then it presses on to the place where it rises.

Blowing now toward the south, then toward the north, the wind turns again and again, resuming its rounds.

All rivers go to the sea, yet never does the sea become full. To the place where they go, the rivers keep on going.

All speech is labored; there is nothing man can say. The eye is not satisfied with seeing nor is the ear filled with hearing.

What has been, that will be; what has been done, that will be done. Nothing is new under the sun.

Even the thing of which we say, "See, this is new!" has already existed in the ages that preceded us.

There is no remembrance of the men of old; nor of those to come will there be any remembrance among those who come after them.

I, Qoheleth, was king over Israel in Jerusalem, and I applied my mind to search and investigate in wisdom all things that are done under the sun. A thankless task God has appointed for men to be busied about.

I have seen all things that are done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and a chase after wind.

What is crooked cannot be made straight, and what is missing cannot be supplied.

Though I said to myself, "Behold, I have become great and stored up wisdom beyond all who were before me in Jerusalem, and my mind has broad experience of wisdom and knowledge"; yet when I applied my mind to know wisdom and knowledge, madness and folly, I learned that this also is a chase after wind.

For in much wisdom there is much sorrow, and he who stores up knowledge stores up grief.

Chapter 2

I said to myself, "Come, now, let me try you with pleasure and the enjoyment of good things." But behold, this too was vanity.

Of laughter I said: "Mad!" and of mirth: "What good does this do?"

I thought of beguiling my senses with wine, though my mind was concerned with wisdom, and of taking up folly, until I should understand what is best for men to do under the heavens during the limited days of their life.

I undertook great works; I built myself houses and planted vineyards;

I made gardens and parks, and set out in them fruit trees of all sorts.

And I constructed for myself reservoirs to water a flourishing woodland.

I acquired male and female slaves, and slaves were born in my house. I also had growing herds of cattle and flocks of sheep, more than all who had been before me in Jerusalem.

I amassed for myself silver and gold, and the wealth of kings and provinces. I got for myself male and female singers and all human luxuries.

I became great, and I stored up more than all others before me in Jerusalem; my wisdom, too, stayed with me.

Nothing that my eyes desired did I deny them, nor did I deprive myself of any joy, but my heart rejoiced in the fruit of all my toil. This was my share for all my toil.

But when I turned to all the works that my hands had wrought, and to the toil at which I had taken such pains, behold! all was vanity and a chase after wind, with nothing gained under the sun.

For what will the man do who is to come after the king? What men have already done! I went on to the consideration of wisdom, madness and folly.

And I saw that wisdom has the advantage over folly as much as light has the advantage over darkness.

The wise man has eyes in his head, but the fool walks in darkness. Yet I knew that one lot befalls both of them.

So I said to myself, if the fool's lot is to befall me also, why then should I be wise? Where is the profit for me? And I concluded in my heart that this too is vanity. Neither of the wise man nor of the fool will there be an abiding remembrance, for in days to come both will have been forgotten. How is it that the wise man dies as well as the fool!

Therefore I loathed life, since for me the work that is done under the sun is evil; for all is vanity and a chase after wind.

And I detested all the fruits of my labor under the sun, because I must leave them to a man who is to come after me.

And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will have control over all the fruits of my wise labor under the sun. This also is vanity. So my feelings turned to despair of all the fruits of my labor under the sun.

For here is a man who has labored with wisdom and knowledge and skill, and to another, who has not labored over it, he must leave his property. This also is vanity and a great misfortune. For what profit comes to a man from all the toil and anxiety of heart with which he has labored under the sun?

All his days sorrow and grief are his occupation; even at night his mind is not at rest. This also is vanity.

There is nothing better for man than to eat and drink and provide himself with good things by his labors. Even this, I realized, is from the hand of God. For who can eat or drink apart from him?

For to whatever man he sees fit he gives wisdom and knowledge and joy; but to the sinner he gives the task of gathering possessions to be given to whatever man God sees fit. This also is vanity and a chase after wind.

Chapter 3

There is an appointed time for everything, and a time for every affair under the heavens.

A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to uproot the plant.

A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to tear down, and a time to build.

A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance.

A time to scatter stones, and a time to gather them; a time to embrace, and a time to be far from embraces.

A time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away.

A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to be silent, and a time to speak.

A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.

What advantage has the worker from his toil?

I have considered the task which God has appointed for men to be busied about.

He has made everything appropriate to its time, and has put the timeless into their hearts, without men's ever discovering, from beginning to end, the work which God has done.

I recognized that there is nothing better than to be glad and to do well during life.

For every man, moreover, to eat and drink and enjoy the fruit of all his labor is a gift of God.

I recognized that whatever God does will endure forever; there is no adding to it, or taking from it. Thus has God done that he may be revered.

What now is has already been; what is to be, already is; and God restores what would otherwise be displaced.

And still under the sun in the judgment place I saw wickedness, and in the seat of justice, iniquity.

And I said to myself, both the just and the wicked God will judge, since there is a time for every affair and on every work a judgment.

I said to myself: As for the children of men, it is God's way of testing them and of showing that they are in themselves like beasts.

For the lot of man and of beast is one lot; the one dies as well as the other. Both have the same life-breath, and man has no advantage over the beast; but all is vanity. Both go to the same place; both were made from the dust, and to the dust they both return.

Who knows if the life-breath of the children of men goes upward and the life-breath of beasts goes earthward?

And I saw that there is nothing better for a man than to rejoice in his work; for this is his lot. Who will let him see what is to come after him?

Reading Comprehension

1. What does the passage mean to you?

2. How does this passage relate to F451?

3. Character Meanings & Common Allusions in F451

Complete as thoroughly as possible for a better understanding of how Bradbury uses allusions.

Guy Montag:

Clarisse McClellan:

Captain Beatty:

Faber:

Granger:

"We have our fingers in the dike" (62).

"Do you know the legend of Hercules and Antaeus, the giant wrestler, whose strength was incredible so long as he stood firmly on the earth?" (83).

"Maybe the books can get us half out of the cave" (74).

"Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring; There shallow draughts intoxicate the brain, and drinking largely sobers us again" (106).

"Old Montag wanted to fly near the Sun and now that he's burnt his damn wings, he wonders why" (113).

"Phoenix...every time he burnt himself up he sprang out of the ashes, he got himself born all over again. And it looks like we're doing the same thing" (163).

Look for something close to this: "Thursday morning, November fifth" (32).

F451 Character Sketch

Draw an outline of your character's body. Find quotations to illustrate at least 5 of the following body parts in preparation for talking to the class about what your character symbolizes. Place the quotations around the character's outline with the page number. Each group will present its sketch to the class. **At the top of the page, write the idea that your group thinks your character symbolizes.**

Head – Intellectual side of the character – What are his dreams? Visions? Philosophies he keeps inside?

Eyes – Seeing through the character's eyes – What memorable sights affect him? How?

Ears – Hearing through the character's ears – What does he notice and remember others saying to him? How is he affected?

Nose – Smelling through the character's nose – What smells affect him? How?

Mouth – The character's communication – What philosophy does the character share/espouse? What arguments/debates? What song would symbolize the character's philosophy of life? What lyrics/images from the song would symbolize his or her philosophy?

Arms – Working – What is the character's relationship to work in general? To specific work?

Hands – The practical side of the character – What conflicts does he or she deal with? How?

Heart – The emotional side of the character – What does he or she love? Whom? How?

Torso – The instinctive side of the character – What doesn't he or she like about himself or herself? What does he or she hide? What brings the character pain? What does he or she fear? (Describe his or her "dark" side.)

Legs – The playful side of the character – What does he or she do for fun? What are his or her avocations?

Feet – The character's mobility – Where has he or she been (literally/figuratively)? How has he or she been affected by travel or setting?

"Wings" – The character's future – Where is he or she going?

August 2026: There Will Come Soft Rains (1950)

Ray Bradbury

In the living room the voice-clock sang, Tick-tock, seven o'clock, time to get up, time to get up, seven o'clock! as if it were afraid that nobody would. The morning house lay empty. The clock ticked on, repeating and repeating its sounds into the emptiness. Seven-nine, breakfast time, seven-nine!

In the kitchen the breakfast stove gave a hissing sigh and ejected from its warm interior eight pieces of perfectly browned toast, eight eggs sunnyside up, sixteen slices of bacon, two coffees, and two cool glasses of milk.

"Today is August 4, 2026," said a second voice from the kitchen ceiling, "in the city of Allendale, California." It repeated the date three times for memory's sake. "Today is Mr. Featherstone's birthday. Today is the anniversary of Tilita's marriage. Insurance is payable, as are the water, gas, and light bills."

Somewhere in the walls, relays clicked, memory tapes glided under electric eyes.

Eight-one, tick-tock, eight-one o'clock, off to school, off to work, run, run, eight-one! But no doors slammed, no carpets took the soft tread of rubber heels. It was raining outside. The weather box on the front door sang quietly: "Rain, rain, go away; rubbers, raincoats for today..." And the rain tapped on the empty house, echoing.

Outside, the garage chimed and lifted its door to reveal the waiting car. After a long wait the door swung down again.

At eight-thirty the eggs were shriveled and the toast was like stone. An aluminum wedge scraped them into the sink, where hot water whirled them down a metal throat which digested and flushed them away to the distant sea. The dirty dishes were dropped into a hot washer and emerged twinkling dry.

Nine-fifteen, sang the clock, time to clean.

Out of warrens in the wall, tiny robot mice darted. The rooms were acrawl with the small cleaning animals, all rubber and metal. They thudded against chairs, whirling their mustached runners, kneading the rug nap, sucking gently at hidden dust. Then, like mysterious invaders, they popped into their burrows. Their pink electric eyes faded. The house was clean.

Ten o'clock. The sun came out from behind the rain. The house stood alone in a city of rubble and ashes. This was the one house left standing. At night the ruined city gave off a radioactive glow which could be seen for miles.

Ten-fifteen. The garden sprinklers whirled up in golden fountains, filling the soft morning air with scatterings of brightness. The water pelted windowpanes, running down the charred west side where the house had been burned evenly free of its white paint. The entire west face of the house was black, save for five places. Here the silhouette in paint of a man mowing a lawn. Here, as in a photograph, a woman bent to pick flowers. Still farther over, their images burned on wood in one titanic instant, a small boy, hands flung into the air; higher up, the image of a thrown ball, and opposite him a girl, hands raised to catch a ball which never came down.

The five spots of paint—the man, the woman, the children, the ball—remained. The rest was a thin charcoaled layer.

The gentle sprinkler rain filled the garden with falling light.

Until this day, how well the house had kept its peace. How carefully it had inquired, "Who goes there? What's the password?" and, getting no answer from lonely foxes and whining cats, it had shut up its windows and drawn shades in an old maidenly preoccupation with self-protection which bordered on a mechanical paranoia.

It quivered at each sound, the house did. If a sparrow brushed a window, the shade snapped up. The bird, startled, flew off! No, not even a bird must touch the house!

The house was an altar with ten thousand attendants, big, small, servicing, attending, in choirs. But the gods had gone away, and the ritual of the religion continued senselessly, uselessly.

Twelve noon.

A dog whined, shivering, on the front porch.

The front door recognized the dog voice and opened. The dog, once huge and fleshy, but now gone to bone and covered with sores, moved in and through the house, tracking mud. Behind it whirred angry mice, angry at having to pick up mud, angry at inconvenience.

For not a leaf fragment blew under the door but what the wall panels flipped open and the copper scrap rats flashed swiftly out. The offending dust, hair, or paper, seized in miniature steel jaws, was raced back to the burrows. There, down tubes which fed into the cellar, it was dropped into the sighing vent of an incinerator which sat like evil Baal in a dark corner.

The dog ran upstairs, hysterically yelping to each door, at last realizing, as the house realized, that only silence was here.

It sniffed the air and scratched the kitchen door. Behind the door, the stove was making pancakes which filled the house with a rich baked odor and the scent of maple syrup.

The dog frothed at the mouth, lying at the door, sniffing, its eyes turned to fire. It ran wildly in circles, biting at its tail, spun in a frenzy, and died. It lay in the parlor for an hour.

Two o'clock, sang a voice.

Delicately sensing decay at last, the regiments of mice hummed out as softly as blown gray leaves in an electrical wind.

Two-fifteen.

The dog was gone.

In the cellar, the incinerator glowed suddenly and a whirl of sparks leaped up the chimney.

Two thirty-five.

Bridge tables sprouted from patio walls. Playing cards fluttered onto pads in a shower of pips. Martinis manifested on an oaken bench with egg-salad sandwiches. Music played.

But the tables were silent and the cards untouched.

At four o'clock the tables folded like great butterflies back through the paneled walls.

Four-thirty.

The nursery walls glowed.

Animals took shape: yellow giraffes, blue lions, pink antelopes, lilac panthers cavorting in crystal substance. The walls were glass. They looked out upon color and fantasy. Hidden films docked through well-oiled sprockets, and the walls lived. The nursery floor was woven to resemble a crisp, cereal meadow. Over this ran aluminum roaches and iron crickets, and in the hot still air butterflies of delicate red tissue wavered among the sharp aroma of animal spoor! There was the sound like a great matted yellow hive of bees within a dark bellows, the lazy bumble of a purring lion. And there was the patter of okapi feet and the murmur of a fresh jungle rain, like other hoofs, falling upon the summer-starved grass. Now the walls dissolved into distances of parched weed, mile on mile, and warm endless sky. The animals drew away into thorn brakes and water holes.

It was the children's hour.

Five o'clock. The bath filled with clear hot water.

Six, seven, eight o'clock. The dinner dishes manipulated like magic tricks, and in the study a click. In the metal stand opposite the hearth where a fire now blazed up warmly, a cigar popped out, half an inch of soft gray ash on it, smoking, waiting.

Nine o'clock. The beds warmed their hidden circuits, for nights were cool here.

Nine-five. A voice spoke from the study ceiling:

"Mrs. McClellan, which poem would you like this evening?"

The house was silent.

The voice said at last, "Since you express no preference, I shall select a poem at random." Quiet music rose to back the voice. "Sara Teasdale. As I recall, your favorite..."

"There will come soft rains and the smell of the ground,
And swallows circling with their shimmering sound;
And frogs in the pools singing at night,
And wild plum trees in tremulous white;
Robins will wear their feathery fire,
Whistling their whims on a low fence-wire;
And not one will know of the war, not one
Will care at last when it is done.
Not one would mind, neither bird nor tree,
if mankind perished utterly;
And Spring herself, when she woke at dawn
Would scarcely know that we were gone."

The fire burned on the stone hearth and the cigar fell away into a mound of quiet ash on its tray. The empty chairs faced each other between the silent walls, and the music played.

At ten o'clock the house began to die.

The wind blew. A failing tree bough crashed through the kitchen window. Cleaning solvent, bottled, shattered over the stove. The room was ablaze in an instant!

"Fire!" screamed a voice. The house lights flashed, water pumps shot water from the ceilings. But the solvent spread on the linoleum, licking, eating, under the kitchen door, while the voices took it up in chorus: "Fire, fire, fire!"

The house tried to save itself. Doors sprang tightly shut, but the windows were broken by the heat and the wind blew and sucked upon the fire.

The house gave ground as the fire in ten billion angry sparks moved with flaming ease from room to room and then up the stairs. While scurrying water rats squeaked from the walls, pistoled their water, and ran for more. And the wall sprays let down showers of mechanical rain.

But too late. Somewhere, sighing, a pump shrugged to a stop. The quenching rain ceased. The reserve water supply which had filled baths and washed dishes for many quiet days was gone.

The fire crackled up the stairs. It fed upon Picassos and Matisse's in the upper halls, like delicacies, baking off the oily flesh, tenderly crisping the canvases into black shavings.

Now the fire lay in beds, stood in windows, changed the colors of drapes!

And then, reinforcements.

From attic trapdoors, blind robot faces peered down with faucet mouths gushing green chemical.

The fire backed off, as even an elephant must at the sight of a dead snake. Now there were twenty snakes whipping over the floor, killing the fire with a clear cold venom of green froth.

But the fire was clever. It had sent flames outside the house, up through the attic to the pumps there. An explosion! The attic brain which directed the pumps was shattered into bronze shrapnel on the beams.

The fire rushed back into every closet and felt of the clothes hung there.

The house shuddered, oak bone on bone, its bared skeleton cringing from the heat, its wire, its nerves revealed as if a surgeon had torn the skin off to let the red veins and capillaries quiver in the scalded air. Help, help! Fire! Run, run! Heat snapped mirrors like the brittle winter ice. And the voices wailed Fire, fire, run, run, like a tragic nursery rhyme, a dozen voices, high, low, like children dying in a forest, alone, alone. And the voices fading as the wires popped their sheathings like hot chestnuts. One, two, three, four, five voices died.

In the nursery the jungle burned. Blue lions roared, purple giraffes bounded off. The panthers ran in circles, changing color, and ten million animals, running before the fire, vanished off toward a distant steaming river....

Ten more voices died. In the last instant under the fire avalanche, other choruses, oblivious, could be heard announcing the time, playing music, cutting the lawn by remote-control mower, or setting an umbrella frantically out and in the slamming and opening front door, a thousand things happening, like a clock shop when each clock strikes the hour insanely before or after the other, a scene of maniac confusion, yet unity; singing, screaming, a few last cleaning mice darting bravely out to carry the horrid ashes away! And one voice, with sublime disregard for the situation, read poetry aloud in the fiery study, until all the film spools burned, until all the wires withered and the circuits cracked.

The fire burst the house and let it slam flat down, puffing out skirts of spark and smoke.

In the kitchen, an instant before the rain of fire and timber, the stove could be seen making breakfasts at a psychopathic rate, ten dozen eggs, six loaves of toast, twenty dozen bacon strips, which, eaten by fire, started the stove working again, hysterically hissing!

The crash. The attic smashing into kitchen and parlor. The parlor into cellar, cellar into sub-cellar. Deep freeze, armchair, film tapes, circuits, beds, and all like skeletons thrown in a cluttered mound deep under.

Smoke and silence. A great quantity of smoke.

Dawn showed faintly in the east. Among the ruins, one wall stood alone. Within the wall, a last voice said, over and over again and again, even as the sun rose to shine upon the heaped rubble and steam:

"Today is August 5, 2026, today is August 5, 2026, today is..."

Thematic Analysis of Fahrenheit 451

Fahrenheit 451 has characters and objects that correspond with Bradbury's ideas about society. You must select one of these symbols and prove the message that symbol is trying to convey.

Your paper should develop an argument about how your symbol works within the novel to create Bradbury's message(s), as you see it. This message should be supported by specific moments from the text that illustrate your point.

Important Information:

- 100 points
- 2 pages minimum
- 12 point Times New Roman
- MLA standards

Grading Criteria:

- **Focus / Thesis:** Is your argument strong and/or original?
- **Organization:** Is your essay organized in a logical way?
- **Content:** Do you pick the best possible quotations/scenes to prove your point?
- **Analysis:** Does your analysis of the text make sense and relate back to your thesis?
- **Mechanics:** No "u" or "4" in your formal essay plz. :)

A message from Mr. Randon: First of all—breathe. If you aren't panicking at this point—that's good. I realize this is our first essay together and that requires some increased understanding from me. This is your chance to show me what you know already. Show off your writing skills. Impress me with your interpretation of the novel. And, if you get stuck and need some help—I'm a teacher, I can help. Good luck, write well.

Notes & Ideas

The Matrix in Fahrenheit 451

You've heard of the epic hero's journey, but what about the dystopian hero's journey?

Find 3 similarities between the "journey" of Neo and Montag:

1.

2.

3.

4. What similarities do you see between the sci-fi setting of The Matrix and F451?

5. What connections are there between the *philosophical concept* of the Matrix, and the concept of burning books?

Other Notes
