

Discussion Questions for *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury

(Questions from the National Endowment for the Arts,
http://www.neabigread.org/books/fahrenheit451/fahrenheit451_06.php)

1. Have you read the book before? What are your impressions, whether you are reading it for the first time or re-reading it?
2. Is the book's title a good one?
3. Montag comes to learn that "firemen are rarely necessary" because "the public itself stopped reading of its own accord." Bradbury wrote his novel in 1953; to what extent has his prophecy come true today?
4. Clarisse describes a past that Montag has never known: one with front porches, gardens, and rocking chairs. What do these items have in common, and how might their removal have encouraged Montag's repressive society?
5. "Don't look to be saved in any one thing, person, machine, or library," Faber tells Montag. "Do your own bit of saving, and if you drown, at least die knowing you were headed for shore." How good is this advice?
6. One of the most significant of the many literary allusions in *Fahrenheit 451* occurs when Montag reads Matthew Arnold's poem "Dover Beach." What is the response of Mildred's friends, and why does Montag kick them out of his house?
7. It may surprise the reader to learn that Beatty is quite well read. How can Beatty's knowledge of and hatred for books be reconciled?
8. Unlike Mrs. Hudson, Montag chooses not to die in his house with his books. Instead he burns them, asserting even that "it was good to burn" and that "fire was best for everything!" Are these choices and sentiments consistent with his character? Are you surprised that he fails to follow in her footsteps?
9. Beatty justifies the new role of firemen by claiming to be "custodians of [society's] peace of mind, the focus of [the] understandable and rightful dread of being inferior." What does he mean by this, and is there any sense that he might be right?
10. How does the destruction of books lead to more happiness and equality, according to Beatty? Does his lecture to Montag on the rights of man sound like any rhetoric still employed today?
11. Why does Montag memorize the Old Testament's Ecclesiastes and the New Testament's Revelation? How do the final two paragraphs of the novel allude to both biblical books?
12. Are there any circumstances where censorship might play a beneficial role in society? Are there some books that should be banned?
13. If you had to memorize a single book or risk its extinction, which book would you choose?
14. Are there any questions you would like to ask, or other observations you would like to make?