

Extended Essay

Title: Demonstration of Fictional World in Fahrenheit 451

Research Question: “To what extent does Ray Bradbury convey his future dystopia in the novel Fahrenheit 451 through the characters?”

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1. Introduction

Readers are always affected by the storytelling techniques of a writer. These techniques vary a lot and in the novel "Fahrenheit 451" the story is based around the characters so the characters help the reader understand the story better. Ray Bradbury exposes the reader to the story without telling it from first person point of view. This choice enhances the atmosphere which helps the reader see the world through the eyes of Bradbury and develop a similar worldview with him.

A dystopia is a concept created by a person, foreseeing the future and what might happen in time. When a writer creates a future dystopia in a novel they use various ways to convey their dystopia's characteristics. In the book "Fahrenheit 451" Ray Bradbury used the characters to show the reader the effects of the society in which they live. With this book Bradbury showed that a science fiction book can be a good example of literature. "Fahrenheit 451"- one of the most classics of future dystopias is a book published in 1953. The novel tells a future scenario created by Ray Bradbury in which firefighters no longer extinguish fires instead they start it. In this society there is a hate towards books, but there is no reason in the minds of the citizens about it. They just accept it from birth. This manipulation has control over the total population and it is accepted by everyone. However, the main character in the book Guy Montag puts an end to this monarchy by deciding to search for the truth about books. Montag is a firefighter who puts houses on fires and especially makes sure that there are no books left from the house. He does not really know why they are doing this but accepts it blindly just like the others. However, one day Montag meets his new neighbor Clarisse. She introduces Montag to the world's potential for beauty and meaning with her gentle innocence

and curiosity. The most feature in front of eyes is that she asks questions about everything around her. She wakes his inquiry about the books. He feels different for the first time in his life. Then he keeps some of those books to himself in his house secretly. Montag's wife Mildred is obsessed with watching television and refuses to engage in frank conversation with her husband about their marriage or her feelings. Her suicide attempt, which she refuses even to acknowledge, clearly indicates that she harbors a great deal of pain. Small-minded and childish, Mildred does not understand her husband and apparently has no intention to do so. Ray Bradbury wrote this novel to portray his idea of a future dystopia using these characters. Some of the important topics relating with the characters is their identification and censorship. Identification in this novel can be inspected in two categories: Public and characters. The way the important characters identify themselves is the main point present that explains the writer's opinion clearly. The identification of the public in general is given to introduce the atmosphere and the country the characters are living in. Censorship is everywhere in this country and it's another important topic to discuss about the book because it is an essential part of the future dystopia that the writer has in mind.

2. Identification

2.1 Identification of the public

Identification is the recognition and naming of someone or something. People living in the post-war world of "Fahrenheit 451" have a hard time identifying themselves. In this world people in general are beyond identification, they do not possess an identity, a personality that they can be isolated from the society. They are connected to each other with a bond that is so strong that the lines separating them has faded because of the system. This system functions just as if the people living there were robots and they are treated like a horde of sheep. People are so used to the cycle functioning, their awareness of themselves and their surroundings.

“I sometimes think drivers don’t know what grass is, or flowers, because they never see them slowly/ If you showed a driver a green blur, oh yes! he’d say that’s grass! A pink blur? That’s a rose-garden! White blurs are houses. Brown blurs are cows. My uncle drove slowly on a highway once. He drove forty miles an hour and they jailed him for two days.” (Bradbury 16) The quote exemplifies the faded life people are living in. People tend to have an inability to pay attention to the little details in life and does not seem to be bothered about this because at this point they function just like a cogwheel following one another along a circular path. They live in peace if none of these cogwheels break off. In this dystopian America there are no books and no creative ideas to have. Throughout the book people living in the country seems to have no role in the society. They are in such an obedience to the country that they have stopped caring about their own lives and started to just accept what they are given. They are managed with fear. They fear the firefighters. The hound is used as a symbol of the feared institution in America. It hunts rule-breakers smelling criminals from miles away and always aware of its surroundings.

The themes in Fahrenheit 451 points to the struggles of individuals under a repressive society. In the novel Bradbury finds out that our actions are the key to defining our identity. Our actions demonstrate our identity and when looked at characters like Mildred and Mrs. Phelps it can be seen that they are somewhat disconnected from life. Mrs. Phelps shows no reaction after learning her husband has been sent for war but on the contrary she seems shocked and heartbroken when she sees Montag read her a poem. This shows the suppressed identity of the public. They are suppressed up to a point that they can’t stand being exposed to a banned activity.

2.2 Identification of the characters

Guy Montag:

Main character in the story a fireman who realizes the meaningless things in life and starts questioning it after meeting with an extraordinary girl Clarisse McClellan. This is where Montag's identity crisis starts. He becomes skeptical about the things he thought he was certain of. At some points he is not even sure about what he is doing that his hands are moving automatically as if he is not in control over his own identity. He was already in a dangerous spot, because he secretly took some of the books he had to burn for some instinct he himself doesn't even know. With his identity being played on by the characters his actions also differ. Till the end of the book his identity evolves from being a simple adjutant to a rebel, a criminal who tries to make things different unlike most of the people. Under the influence of his new mentors he searches a meaningful way to live. "his desperate quest to define and comprehend his own life and purpose by means of books" (Bradbury 15) Montag's identity crisis grows bigger as the novel progresses. As Bradbury's way of demonstrating one's identity is through their actions Montag's actions are also altered in various ways. He begins to think about his daily life, and aims to understand things he fails to give meaning to. This results in him losing his identity since the beginning of the novel.

Captain Beatty:

He is the captain of the fire department. He hates everything about books including people who read them, however ironically he seems to have extensive knowledge about them. He appears as a manipulative and oppressive character. Several times in the novel it sounds like he has knowledge about Montag's thoughts like he can see Montag's feelings. Also he is so impervious he doesn't even try to prevent his own death. Captain Beatty is used to reflect

the pure authority everyone is afraid of. He is the evil figure that function as the cover page of absolute power present in the country. The identification of this character is the

Professor Faber:

An old English professor who chose to become obedient to the overbearing rules imposed on the society in order to survive. But as can be seen from his dialogues he becomes regretful and angry to himself. He accepts himself as a failure and a coward for not living like he would normally if he had freedom. He helps Montag learn the true spirit he and others had eventually leading Montag into having a bigger identity crisis, which was necessary at that moment. Bradbury uses professor Faber to show the regret in peoples' minds that they were not strong enough to choose for themselves, so they became pale. They became more and more alike as they were just surviving not living.

Clarisse McClellan:

A young woman obsessed with her freedom and has a curious personality. She likes to try new things, and find out the beauties of life. When Montag encounters Clarisse for the first time he is absolutely shocked at that moment. Used to being feared by people because he is a fireman Montag has a hard time believing someone like Clarisse exist. Unlike the rest of the society Clarisse questions life around her. Her character is intriguing as she is refusing to live the dogmatic life everyone else is living. "Isn't this a nice time of night to walk? I like to smell things and look at things, and sometimes stay up all night, walking, and watch the sun rise. They walked on again in silence and finally she said, thoughtfully, you know I'm not afraid of you at all. He was surprised. Why should you be? So many people are. Afraid of fireman, I mean. But you're just a man, after all..." (Bradbury 14)

3. Censorship

Censorship is one of the main themes in the novel Fahrenheit 451. Censorship is the suppression or prohibition of any parts of books, films, news, etc. that are considered unacceptable, or a threat to security. In the novel Ray Bradbury shows the suppression and the shortening of freedom of thinking through censorship. Books are banned in this dystopic future, so no one can reach and learn about subjects written in various books. Burning books is a symbol to the destruction of individual thought that is printed on paper. As told in the novel books slowly began to reduce in number and eventually went extinct. Ray Bradbury uses this theme to back up the destruction of individual thought in the novel.

“Fahrenheit 451” describes books as tools that make people ask questions and become harder to manage. That is the reason they are considered evil and banned. Any kind of intellectuality is considered a crime because it can harm the peace of the society. It is easier to suppress every thought than to give everyone the right to have free thinking and personal ideas. All intellectual curiosity and hunger for knowledge must be suppressed for the good of the public for conformism. Without ideas, everyone adapts, and as a result, everyone ought to be content. When books and new ideas are available to people, conflict and unhappiness occur. Firemen in the country make people believe books are evil. This enforcement is too widely spread up to a point that most of the people believe that books are empty collection of papers joined together and so long and boring that even if it has an interesting subject it is impossible to learn what the book is trying to tell because of the writer’s self-esteem style.

Bradbury actually tries to tell that if people continue their lives as they do today recklessly dystopian futures like this are far from fiction. They are telling what will happen in

the future with people getting away and away from free thinking, from books. This novel is like a warning to everyone reading it about the future ahead of us. "As Beatty explains to Montag, people didn't stop reading books because a tyrannical government forced them to stop. They stopped reading books gradually over time as the culture around them grew faster, shallower, intellectually blander, and centered around minor thrills and instant gratification. In such a culture, books became shorter, magazine and newspaper articles became simpler, cartoon pictures and television became more prevalent, and entertainment replaced reflection and debate." Based on observations on people Bradbury thinks that people are leaning towards becoming empty souls without free thought and personal ideas.

In the novel every type of book is diminished by the government except rule books, three dimensional comic books, and trade journals. This censorship policy is made to protect the society from having a thought and to keep the so-called peace that they have. However, even sometimes hiding the reality is necessary it is ultimately a harmful process in which the people affected are deprived of their most basic rights. By employing firefighters that burn every piece of book they find the government prevents people from seeing information that could have changed their way of thinking, or give them a reason to think and live freely. Banning the "books deemed to cause public harm" is the governments' way of dealing with something that cause the separation of society. "You're not like the others. I've seen a few; I know. When I talk, you look at me. When I said something about the moon, you looked at the moon, last night. The others would never do that." (Bradbury, 34)

Ray Bradbury imagined a society so isolated that they just know each other's names. Basically every single relationship has become empty inside. They don't want to know others' thoughts, feelings just like their attitude towards books their curiosity, their willingness to learn faded. Guy Montag, after realizing the misery of his life, comes up with a thought that he is married just because marriage is a common tradition and that he does not actually feel

any affection towards his wife. He realizes he does not care what Mildred thinks and that he would not even feel bad if she were dead. In this country people have become so selfish that they just think about themselves just like when Mildred gave in Montag because she thought it could cause her danger that there were books in her house. Books are tools with which writers convey their own thoughts or help the reader to construct their own thoughts. Bradbury shows a possible worst case scenario where the people are degenerated and reluctant about having thoughts about anything.

4.Important Thoughts and Ideas

"Fahrenheit 451" by Ray Bradbury is a novel that deals with the theme of transmitted thoughts and ideas. The novel is set in a dystopian society where books are banned and the government controls what people are allowed to think and say. The protagonist, Guy Montag, is a fireman who is responsible for burning any books that are discovered. However, as the story progresses, Montag begins to question the government's actions and begins to search for knowledge and truth himself.

One of the most important ideas Bradbury conveys in this novel is the importance of knowledge and critical thinking. In the world of "Fahrenheit 451," the government tries to control what people think by restricting access to books and other sources of information. But as the story shows, this kind of control only leads to a society without purpose. Montag begins to realize that there is more to life than just getting through the daily grind, and that true happiness lies in the pursuit of knowledge and understanding. Through Montag's journey, Bradbury emphasizes the importance of critical thinking and encourages readers to question the world around them.

Another idea Bradbury conveys in this novel is the danger of conformity. In the society of "Fahrenheit 451," everyone is expected to think and act in the same way. Those

who do not conform are punished harshly, and there is no room for individuality. But as the story shows, conformity leads to a society that is boring and lifeless. Only through the actions of characters like Montag and Clarisse does the possibility of change arise. By highlighting the dangers of conformity, Bradbury encourages readers to embrace their own unique thoughts and ideas and resist the pressures of conformity.

The novel also explores the theme of the power of literature. As the story progresses, Montag becomes increasingly drawn to books and their ability to convey strong ideas and feelings. Bradbury emphasizes the importance of literature in inspiring change and challenging the status quo. In the world of "Fahrenheit 451," books are considered dangerous because they can inspire people to question authority and think for themselves. But as the story shows, it is exactly this kind of inspiration that is needed to bring about change and create a better society.

Ultimately, "Fahrenheit 451" conveys the idea that change is possible, but requires courage and sacrifice. Throughout the story, Montag and the other characters face significant challenges and obstacles in their quest for knowledge and truth. They risk everything, including their lives, to fight government control and strive for a better future. Bradbury emphasizes the importance of standing up for what is right, even in the face of overwhelming opposition. Through the characters' struggles, he encourages readers to be brave and never give up the pursuit of truth and justice.

5. Conclusion

"Fahrenheit 451" by Ray Bradbury is a thought-provoking novel that explores the themes of censorship and identification in a dystopian society. The novel is set in a future where books are banned and firefighters are ordered to burn all remaining copies. Bradbury's novel warns of the dangers of censorship and the suppression of free thought, and emphasises the importance of critical thinking and individuality. The novel also addresses the dangers of over-reliance on technology and the need for human relationships.

The theme of censorship is a common thread throughout the novel, as the government attempts to control the thoughts and opinions of its citizens by restricting access to books. The firemen in the novel are ordered to burn all remaining copies of books, and anyone caught with a book is severely punished. Bradbury's depiction of a society in which free thought and expression are suppressed is a warning about the dangers of censorship. By cutting off access to other views and ideas, the government can control events and prevent dissent. However, as the novel shows, censorship only serves to suppress creativity and individuality, ultimately leading to a society without meaning or purpose.

Identification is another central theme of the novel, as the government uses technology to monitor and control its citizens. The characters in the novel are constantly monitored and their actions and thoughts are closely followed. This constant surveillance prevents people from forming real relationships and leads to an alienated and uninvolved society. The importance of interpersonal relationships is emphasised throughout the novel, and the characters who are able to build these relationships are ultimately the ones who are able to resist government control.

In conclusion, "Fahrenheit 451" is a cautionary tale about the dangers of censorship and identification. Bradbury's novel is a warning about the suppression of free thought and the need for individuality and critical thinking. The novel also emphasises the importance of human relationships and warns against the dangers of over-reliance on technology. By addressing these issues, Bradbury's novel remains relevant today and reminds us of the importance of protecting our freedom of thought and expression.

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