



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2018 Volume III: Adaptation: Literature, Film and Society

Fahrenheit 451 in 2018: Can film bring Ray Bradbury's classic into the modern age?

Guide for Curriculum Unit 18.03.06, published September 2018
by Jennifer Mazzocco

Fahrenheit 451 is a classic taught frequently in high school classrooms across the United States; over its lifetime, it has also been the victim of banning and censorship, bringing to life the issues it addresses. *Fahrenheit 451* was set in a dystopian future, but its themes tie it tightly to the world of the 1950s America it hopes to criticize.

In May 2018, Home Box Office released director Ramin Bahrani's film adaptation. Many of the themes of the novel hold true despite the film's many significant departures from the novel. These changes, however, are able to translate the themes into a modern context: they are not simply the lessons of the 1953 novel applied to today, but they are complicated to fit the world of 2018. In fact, translation to the medium of film allows the director to raise more complex themes in a subtle manner that might be difficult or impossible to do the same way with written prose.

In this unit, students will view Bahrani's 2018 film *Fahrenheit 451* in conjunction with a reading of Bradbury's novel. As they watch, they will consider the complications of translating a dystopic novel like *Fahrenheit 451* into a modern context. Students will consider how the director uses the techniques of film to tailor a message specific to a 2018 audience and whether the changes made effectively beg the viewer to question society.

(Developed for English 1 CAS and English 1 PSP, grade 9; recommended for English Language Arts, grades 9-12)

<https://teachers.yale.edu>

©2023 by the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, Yale University, All Rights Reserved. Yale National Initiative®, Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute®, On Common Ground®, and League of Teachers Institutes® are registered trademarks of Yale University.

For terms of use visit https://teachers.yale.edu/terms_of_use