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Our Right to Read, to Learn, and to Think: Ray Bradbury's Prediction

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Overview

This unit addresses the American classroom and how Supreme Court rulings have shaped education in the United States from elementary through high school. In a three week unit ninth grade scholars will develop an understanding of how laws and court rulings affect their rights to an education in our country. In the Pittsburgh Public Schools, the *PSP* program (Pittsburgh Scholars Program) is populated by students who are above mainstream level in achievement and work ethic but not eligible for the gifted program because of IQ scores. In my high school these classes are usually fully enrolled (30 students) with 22 - 25 white students and 5- 8 Asian and African American students between the ages of 13 and 18. At Taylor Allderdice High School there may be three to five sections each of Mainstream, Scholars, and Gifted English classes per grade (9-12). Classes are taught daily for 43 minutes per period and last throughout the entire school year. While this unit is intended for 9th grade, adaptations for other high school grades will be included in **Appendix A**.

The background material in this unit will include *who* has been allowed to learn, *where* students have been allowed to attend school, and *what* they have been allowed to study throughout this country's existence. To achieve this, Supreme Court cases will be presented to illustrate the former restrictions and the freedoms that have been won in American education over the past two hundred years. Information on the Supreme Court case: *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) will illustrate to students what their educational rights are and how they became their rights. All of this will serve as a lead-in to a unit on Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* which poses the question of the government's right to decide what is allowed to be learned, how, who will learn it, and where.

Rationale

Students in America today take their education for granted. Many disparage the reality that forces them to attend school at all. An examination of the history of education in this country will be a valuable step in building an understanding of the American education system, why it was created; and how it has evolved over the past two hundred and some odd years.

To begin such a study, students will be given an overview of education from the time of the early European settlers, outlining their goals for their children and future generations in this new land. Moving from the earliest schools, students will then examine the restrictions involving Native Americans and African slaves, how some of them were educated before and during the Civil War, and how the struggles for equality in education progressed following the war.

The Supreme Court became involved in five education cases in the 1950s with *Brown v. Board of Education* being the most famous. This landmark case served to set in motion mass school desegregation. Many of today's students know about Little Rock and the struggles that black students experienced during that time, but how the rulings came about are not as well known. Prior to *Brown*, *Plessy v. Ferguson* set a precedent for the "separate but equal" policy that was to become a familiar refrain for all opponents of segregated schools for many years to come.

Examination of the Court's involvement in this case will demonstrate to the student how much power the Supreme Court wields and how difficult it is to change long-held laws, opinions, and practices. Building on this wealth of information, students can become aware of cases involving prayer and censorship in public schools for future exploration on their own.

This information will foster the growing awareness in the student that will inspire an ongoing curiosity about the law and how it works, helping them to grow into thinking, caring adults who will rise to the cause when they experience injustice.

Objectives/Strategies

The students will be able to:

- understand how the Supreme Court influences their lives through examining cases involving education issues.
- make judgments about the action of the litigants involved in these cases and the rulings.
- improve in their ability to evaluate information to make judgments and to transfer what they have learned to other experiences.
- explore how they can make a difference as productive members of society through becoming informed voters and advocates for worthy causes.
- view literature and art as a means of conveying advocacy of important social themes through the study of *Fahrenheit 451*.
- gain experience in group discussion and informal debating on topics of mutual interest with their cohort group.
- learn to compare a book and film and to evaluate the differences between the two.

The curriculum provides ample opportunity to explore the effect of laws on citizens. Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* will feature most prominently in the study in the ninth grade scholars' classroom. After studying specific court cases that pertain to schools, students will read a fictional account of a government's intervention into the lives of its citizens and the effects this has on the society depicted. The point of this is in the value of education, reading, and thinking for each and every person. For each step in the study worksheets will be

utilized (see **Appendices**) to guide the students and give them a "roadmap" to their study that they can use to link the different readings. Ultimately, students should realize the value of education and the importance of thinking for themselves and not allowing anyone or any group to deprive them of these things.

Anticipatory Set

Before embarking on a study of Supreme Court cases and their relationship to education, students must first be made aware of how the courts and the laws affect their lives. A poster of the Fourteenth Amendment will be displayed in the classroom. This should spark some interest in the students who will, I hope, ask why it is in English class. I will then ask them why they think it is there. If students don't discover that the provisions relate to education, I will point out the section prohibiting the government to "abridge the privileges" of its citizens and ask the students what that has to do with education. This should segue to a discussion/lecture about what they know about education in this country, the history of it, the reasons behind establishing public education, and how important education is to their own futures. Gathering opinions and facts will present a lot of different ideas from the students. This information can be jotted on the board and made into a poster to be referred to, added to, and possibly, corrected as the unit progresses.

Introductory Material

Education in Early America

"America's noble experiment—universal education for all citizens—is a cornerstone of our democracy." — from *School: The Story of American Education* produced by PBS¹

To construct an understanding of the goals of our educational system many questions must be posed for discussion:

Why do we have compulsory education in this country and why is it free?

Who is allowed to attend school and where are they allowed to attend school?

What are teachers allowed to teach?

Why do we have compulsory education in this country and why is it free?

Today's students know it is the law for them to attend school but many of them are at a loss as to why mandatory attendance is a legal issue. Few think about the original goal of education when the early Americans established their ideas about what kind of education they wanted for their children. Both boys and girls studied the basics deemed necessary for everyone to learn: religion, reading, writing, some history. Girls also learned needlework and household management. Boys were given more education than girls and studied

Latin, higher mathematics and celestial navigation (sailing ships by the stars). Young children often attended a Dame school. This has been likened to a nursery school or a family day care where a housewife would teach children their ABCs, numbers, and prayers. Some well-to-do families sent their older sons to England to study law or medicine. Children from poor families received no education and were apprenticed at a young age. Once apprenticed, the child would be taught as much as he needed to know to do his job.

Early European settlers viewed education as a necessary accomplishment to ward off evil. If citizens could read the Bible they would be safe from Satan. Puritans, in particular, believed that people were inherently bad and had to be taught to be good. Education made good Christians and valuable members of society. In light of this, education became a necessary means to becoming a worthwhile adult.

In the 1640s, Massachusetts established compulsory education laws. These laws mandated that children must be educated by their parents or masters. This meant being able to read well enough to understand the Bible, manage a household, and run a farm. In 1647, Massachusetts passed a law known as the Deluder Satan Act that required towns of fifty or more families to open a school and hire a teacher, thus making schools free for the children of that particular town. In the 1680s, Quakers in Philadelphia established the first public school. Known for their tolerance of others' beliefs and practices, the Quakers were the first to establish a school open to children of various faiths.

Who is allowed to attend school and where are they allowed to attend school?

But there were still a number of children who did not attend school at all in this land in the late 1600s. Native Americans, who were largely without written language (except for the Cherokee), did not run schools and European settlers certainly did not invite Native American children to their schools. As a people who were constantly being uprooted and disenfranchised, there were no schools provided for Native Americans for many years. Only when Reservations were established was any formal education designed and provided for Native Americans. Even today, schools located in existing Reservations are substandard and largely overlooked.

Over one hundred years from the time the first Africans were brought to this country as slaves, Horace Mann was born in 1796. After spending the greater part of the first half of the nineteenth century in politics, he became the First Secretary of the State Board of Education in Massachusetts in 1837 and is today acknowledged as the father of American public school education. Throughout his career, Mann worked for improvements in education. From establishing libraries and teacher training centers to raising public support and awareness of the needs for educational improvements to writing several Annual Reports for the "Common School Journal" of education, Mann's influence reached beyond his home state to encourage growth and improvement in education throughout the nation.

When Africans were brought to this country and sold as slaves they were considered to be property and had no access to education. A 1787 petition to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Bay pleaded for African American children to be allowed to benefit from the free public schools in Boston.² In many Southern states it was against the law to teach a slave to read and write. Some slaves became educated in spite of the fact it was a crime and some slave owners even taught their slaves to read and write.

Following the end of the Civil War and the Emancipation of the slaves, a host of social problems were created. In addition to where the newly-freed African-Americans would live and work was the question of education for the African-American children. While school segregation continued in the South until *Brown* (and in many instances, even after *Brown*), Louisiana began desegregating its schools in 1869. For about ten years after the war the Freedman's Bureau tried to help former slaves become acclimated to their new status. The Bureau

helped to establish churches and serve as a resource for former slaves to consult, but funding ran out and President Johnson seized lands distributed to the slaves by the Bureau and returned them to their former white owners. After only a short time the Bureau was discontinued.

The struggles for equality in education continued for the next half century. During that time many other events occurred which affected life in America including World War I and the 1922 Compulsory Education Act. This legislation required parents to send their children to public schools. The *Pierce v. Society of Sisters* (1925) case argued the constitutionality of a law forcing parents to send their children to a *public* rather than a parochial or other private school. The court did indeed declare the law unconstitutional. While government can demand compulsory education it cannot determine where children must be educated.

The twentieth century saw many Supreme Court cases involving education. The most important of these was *Brown v. Board of Education*, begun in 1952, which argued that an elementary school child should not have to walk a mile through a dangerous railroad yard to attend school when there was an elementary school only seven blocks from her home. This case mushroomed into a national case for ending racial segregation in all schools throughout the country. The very fact that the Supreme Court participated in a case such as this brought to light the importance of education and the absolute necessity of refuting *Plessy v. Ferguson* as did the seriousness with which the American public split, from those who defied the ruling to those who upheld it and worked toward making school integration happen.

Hailed by many as the most important decision of the Supreme Court in the twentieth century (or ever) *Brown v. Board of Education*, forever changed education in this country.

What are teachers allowed to teach?

Litigation involving educational rights took off after the triumph of *Brown* and its accompanying cases with litigation heard on various rights, specifically the following cases involving school prayer: *Engel v. Vitale*, (1962), *Abington School District v. Schempp*, (1963) and *Wallace v. Jaffree*, (1985). Other cases addressing censorship of students' speeches and writings, such as *Bethel School District v. Fraser*, 478 U.S. 675 (1986), *Board of Education, Island Trees Union Free School District v. Pico* 457 U.S. 853 (1982), and acts of Congress concerning the rights of students with disabilities to obtain an education (The Americans with Disabilities Act 1990) followed.

What this means to today's students

Today's students are largely unaware that prayer was a routine part of the school day until the middle of the twentieth century. They are routinely taught about Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Montgomery Boycott but what many of them do not realize is that school is a privilege for *everyone* and that education has a direct bearing on their futures. Examination of a futuristic society where the right to read has been outlawed may make them reevaluate their own educational opportunities. This vision of the future will present to the students what a gift it is to be able to read and think and to be allowed to do so.

Landmark Cases

Cases involving (or influencing) school segregation:

Dred Scott v. Sandford (1857) held that no African American could be a citizen of the United States and therefore none could bring a lawsuit in a Federal Court.

Plessy v. Ferguson (1896) held that segregated (separate but equal) facilities for African Americans did not violate the U.S Constitution.

Brown v. Board of Education (1954) held that school segregation did violate the Constitution.

Engel v. Vitale, (1962), *Abington School District v. Schempp*, (1963) and *Wallace v. Jaffree*, (1985), *Bethel School District v. Fraser*, 478 U.S. 675 (1986), *Board of Education, Island Trees Union Free School District v. Pico* 457 U.S. 853 (1982) These cases all involve school prayer and are included for those who wish to further their study of First Amendment causes.

Narrative

Up to this point class has been devoted to an encapsulated version of the history of education in America and the progress that has been made over the last several hundred years. Most students today would not even consider the possibility that they would be required to pay for schooling until they reach college. As to who is allowed to attend, anyone of school age is allowed to attend with modifications for special needs students. What is allowed to be taught in school? Many students confuse what goes on in school with their First Amendment rights. They don't believe their lockers should be searched or that books from the Ghetto Library should be banned from counting as book report reading.

At this stage students will be ready to begin the study of the novel. I will ask them how to read a novel and they will look at me as if I have suddenly lost my mind. I will take them through the reading of the first sentence and the first paragraph of any novel, pointing out how the tone is set and the reader is prepared for what follows. Next I will explain the *stasis/instability/new stasis*³ formula to show how a story starts before the problem, the *stasis*; moves on to the turmoil, the *instability*; and, through this journey creates a reorganized order of things; a *new stasis*.

Then it will be time to sample Ray Bradbury's fear for the future. Readers of Bradbury know of his speculations that technology will be the undoing of mankind and that if machines do too much of the work for humans it will make them soft, both physically, and soft in the head. Upon beginning the study of *Fahrenheit 451*, students are often confused and sometimes turned off by the opening section. It is a completely alien idea that a fireman's job should be to burn books. At first, many students will applaud this idea thinking that it would be great to be relieved of all the homework they are assigned. This is before they read about the effect of removing the literature base of society.

Part One is titled, "The Hearth and the Salamander." The opening paragraphs are arresting. The first of many motifs are introduced: the "great python" of the fire hose filled with kerosene, and the first reflection, "a minstrel man, burnt-corked in the mirror." Imagery is set in motion; the pictures Bradbury creates seem to move: "the house jumped up in a gorging fire" and "The flapping pigeon-winged books died on the porch and the lawn of the house."

Montag is alone here. The reader's introduction to him is amid sparks and flames and ashes. This is an interesting use of words to contradict ideas; the sparks and flames Montag uses in the beginning are destructive, yet his interest in learning is sparked and ignited by Clarisse and fanned into flame by Faber. At

the beginning of the novel his isolation is normal for him; for his society it is the triumph of the dehumanization process. This is the *stasis*. Bradbury's vision of the future is a bleak one in which people have been made numb to emotions because access to their feelings was cut off when their books were outlawed. In a place where it is illegal to read, people lose touch with feelings and even with memories. Without a written or oral tradition it is difficult to organize information. Helen Keller once wrote that she had few memories before she learned to communicate with Annie Sullivan because she had no language to which she could attach memories before that time. Removing this connection between people and generations speeds the dehumanization process.

When Montag and Clarisse reach her house she makes a reference to Bradbury's theme in his short story, "The Pedestrian," in which a man out for a walk is stopped by the only police car in the city, manned by robot police, and cited for walking. This was based on an incident Ray Bradbury himself experienced. While out walking one evening he was stopped by police and asked what he was doing. They didn't appreciate his answer: "Putting one foot in front of the other," and cited him. He ended up promising never to do it again.⁴ Clarisse compares her parents and uncle sitting around talking to being like a pedestrian.

What is most disconcerting to Montag is Clarisse's parting question, "Are you happy?" She disappears without waiting for an answer as though she wants him to ask himself. He is rankled by the question and cannot shake it. The next short section contains an avalanche of ideas: Montag's indignation that she would dare think he wasn't happy, the foreshadowing of what's behind the ventilator grille, how beautiful Clarisse's face was. "How like a mirror, too, her face. Impossible; for how many people did you know who refracted your own light on you?" He continues to think about how much larger than life she seemed and how she had almost seemed to be waiting for him.

However, these ruminations are cut short by Montag discovering his wife had overdosed. After the "paramedics" fix her up (they seem to be more like appliance repairmen) Montag sneaks across the yard to stand outside Clarisse's house. He knows there is something more, something he's been missing. He is on the path to self-discovery. After meeting Clarisse he remembers a meeting with a man in a park awhile ago. His work suffers. Bradbury employs a "watchdog," the Mechanical Hound of the firehouse. It takes a dislike to Montag. He becomes an alien in his workplace.

What is it that makes people human? In some societies, ostracism is the ultimate punishment. Here, people are isolating themselves from their feelings. In Francois Truffaut's film, *Fahrenheit 451* (1966), the isolation is shown through people looking at their reflections in the windows on the train and stroking themselves, as if they were trying to remember something or reconnect with something lost.

What happens when people are deprived of this opportunity to connect? They drink, do drugs, drive too fast, and seek any kind of thrills. They use loud music and lots of colored lights flashing. Bradbury wrote this in 1953 before drive-bys, wall TVs, and the widespread use of street drugs. He was warning us of the possibility of dehumanization.

Dehumanization has been practiced throughout history, most recently with the slaves in this country and later with the Holocaust Jews. The process was methodical and effective. Removing rights, family ties, and geographical ties from both groups, denying the Jews access to any pleasurable or instructive pursuits, stripping them of their identities through numbering, shaving their heads, and exchanging their clothing—all these things were an attempt to dehumanize. What advantages the Jews had were their previous education and strong religious beliefs while the slaves had their religion and the hope of being reunited with lost family

members. Bradbury uses the character Faber to state flat out to Montag what is vital to living a real life:

Number one: quality of information. Number two: leisure to digest it. And number three: the right to carry out actions based on what we learn from the interaction of the other two.

Without these elements people can be led easily—slaves, Jews in Europe, citizens in Bradbury's society: "let each one go to his door" citizens are instructed. Truffaut showed this eerie phenomenon. And how very few people disobeyed! Yet is it the few who remained human that the future generations have to thank; those slaves who learned to read on the sly, who escaped to the North, who regained lost family members; Jews in the camps who remained strong in their faith and forged relationships with others; and, in *Fahrenheit 451*, characters like Clarisse who continued to question and embrace life; the young and less afraid. Then there was Faber, older and fearful, who had such a wealth of knowledge to sustain him and a tenuous relationship with such a few other older intellectuals. His flight to his friend in St. Louis was his salvation at the end of the book.

Where is that spark and how is it extinguished or coaxed into flame? With Montag it was Clarisse who was the igniter, but he had to have been ready to be receptive. He was, since Bradbury tells the reader that he'd sensed something: "The air seemed charged with a special calm as if someone had waited there, quietly, and only a moment before he came, simply turned to a shadow and let him through." This is the point to attack the students and ask them; has your spark been ignited or has your desire for knowledge been extinguished? How does this happen and why? Why, in today's world, do people allow their innate curiosity to die out? Ask the kids this. I think Bradbury knew that too much saturation of sound and swirling lights would deaden one's ability to connect thoughts in a meaningful way. Once you get out of the habit of thinking, it becomes much easier to let the music and lights fill up that space in your mind and just drift along with the current. Ask the kids why so many of them don't want to read; don't want to know things, why things they might read about are so unimportant to them.

Is today's world an accurate realization of what Bradbury predicted: drive-bys, "wilding," preoccupation with electronic music and toys? Some kids will tell you they can't study without music playing. Ask them. Clarisse tells Montag that she listens to people talking and they don't say anything. Ask your students how many of them ever spend time in their rooms or outside without music, TV, or a video game. Assign them an activity that requires this. Also assign an activity that requires listening to a conversation between two people in a public place such as in line at a store or waiting for the bus. Have them listen to the inanity of this discourse. Then talk about it in class. They will be amazed at what they hear.

Soon after this encounter with Clarisse, Montag asks his wife Mildred how they met. Neither one of them remembers. She is unbothered but Montag is shaken.

The enormity of what is happening comes to a climax at the end of the first section. First, Montag meets the woman who would rather burn with her books than give them up. This makes him physically ill and he reasons that something must be in those books to make a person prefer to die than live without them. He tells his wife that a man spends time writing what he has thought about and he, Montag, burns it up in a flash. This harkens back to Cleopatra and the burning of the library at Alexandria. She rages at Caesar, telling him that no one has a right to destroy another man's thoughts. Beatty, no fool, has seen Montag's crisis coming; he visits Montag to caution him. Here is where Bradbury's warning is clear. Beatty's philosophy is one of benevolent censorship. He tells Montag that people are unhappy if they think too much or if they think that

others are happier than they are. He says they must burn *Little Black Sambo* because it offends black people and burn *Uncle Tom's Cabin* because it makes white people uncomfortable. "The bigger your market, Montag, the less you handle controversy." He recounts how everything had become so censored and plain vanilla that people lost interest in reading and became happier: "The mind drinks less and less." The government's attempts to appease separate interest groups and minorities made everything bland and uninteresting: "We must all be alike. Not everyone born equal, like the Constitution says, but everyone *made* equal." To further this horrific possibility, Kurt Vonnegut gave us the short story "Harrison Bergeron," in which handicaps, like weights are assigned to people to make them more alike.

Beatty's explanation of such anomalies as Clarisse is that she was an odd duck, an embarrassment who didn't want to know how to do something, she wanted to know *why*. "The home environment can undo a lot you try to do at school. That's why we've lowered the kindergarten age year after year until we're practically snatching them from the cradle." This is a frightening thought in today's world where teachers blame the home environment for their students' lack of school readiness and apathy toward study.

Part One ends with Montag confessing to Mildred that he has books and his plea to her to read with him for 24 hours to see if there's anything in them. After that, he promises, if there's nothing worthwhile, he'll burn them. And so they read away the afternoon with the three walls of the TV dark.

It is interesting that in this society people *can* read. There are firehouse rules and signs and directions. When Truffaut made the film everything was in pictograms— the newspaper comics— all of it, and the film credits were spoken, but in Bradbury's original, people *can* read but they only read the blandest of directions and perhaps short notes, lists, rules, and television scripts which have no substance. How, then, is it that Montag can read with such understanding? We must believe that as recently as fifteen years earlier reading was still taught. If this is so, there must have been a great number of people who easily slipped into the non-thinking lifestyle of non-reading. We know there are many who defy the law because firemen are still needed. That Montag can read Dickens and understand it shows that his intellect is no longer dormant. Thanks to Clarisse, now gone, Montag has been reawakened. In Part Two, the fact that Montag can read "Dover Beach" and bring Mildred's friend Helen to tears shows that all emotion is not dead; it is dormant, and the human race is still salvageable.

At the beginning of Part Two, "The Sieve and the Sand," Montag dredges up a childhood memory of trying to fill a sieve with sand to get a dime from his cousin. Now he is trying to keep what he has read from sifting away from his consciousness. With Clarisse dead and Mildred suspicious of him, Montag must find another person with whom to connect. It is at this point he remembers Faber, the old man in the park he met a year before. He calls Faber who hangs up on him, fearful. Millie's friends are coming over to watch the White Clown and he leaves to find Faber. On the train he tries to think but the chanting of the advertisements effectively disrupts his thought patterns.

His plan is to get books printed again. Faber is weary and doesn't want to hear it. Then Montag makes his desperate move; he begins tearing pages from the Bible he's carrying. That conquers Faber and they agree to work on a plan. Faber gives Montag a "bug" so they can talk back and forth to one another. Faber will be Montag's guiding voice, his angel. Upon returning home, Montag has to face Millie's inane friends who have come to sip martinis and watch the White Clown. Then Montag makes a daring and reckless move. He reads to them.

Is this the action of a coward or a fool? It is difficult to say, but Montag is in a manic state. He switches off the White Clown and announces the night's entertainment. What he chooses is "Dover Beach," Matthew Arnold's

poem about the "crisis of faith" in the mid Victorian world". War is looming in Montag's world but the citizens are barely aware. As Millie's friend says, "It's always somebody else's husband dies, they say." Montag reads of the failure of culture and Millie's friend Helen weeps. It is probably the first honest emotion she has experienced in her memory. Faber hisses in Montag's ear to stop but Montag can't stop. The women all leave immediately and Montag sees the result of his actions: "I made them unhappier than they've been in years, I think, said Montag. 'It shocked me to see Mrs. Phelps cry.'"

Back at the firehouse Montag hands over a book to Beatty who teases him about book knowledge by quoting book after book, trying to convince Montag that they contradict each other and that's why they are no good. Fortunately, Faber says in Montag's ear, he's trying to confuse you. You've heard him, now hear me, then *think for yourself*.

This is when I stop and ask the students if they should believe everything I tell them. Then I ask them whether they should think about what I tell them and what other people tell them and what they read. They don't answer right away. They think first. I tease them by saying how cruel and unusual a punishment I inflict on them daily by asking them to think!

Faber's final caution here is this: "But remember that the Captain belongs to the most dangerous enemy to truth and freedom, the solid unmoving cattle of the majority." And then Beatty's piece de resistance comes at the close of Part Two. They answer a fire alarm and Montag is shocked: "Why," Montag said slowly, "we've stopped in front of *my* house."

Part Three is entitled "Burning Bright." It opens with Montag's house in flames, Mildred hurrying to a taxi and Beatty smirking at Montag. Montag is no longer dehumanized; he has been resurrected first by Clarisse and then by Faber. As the transformation has taken shape, Montag has found himself distanced from Beatty and all the firehouse represents and from Mildred and his "home" life. Thus, his isolation from everything in his former life is complete. The *instability* is at its zenith.

This begins the journey, both real and metaphorical, to the *new stasis*. Montag literally bums his bridges behind him. After realizing that Mildred called in the alarm, Montag knows that the last thread holding him in place has snapped. Then Beatty taunts him by telling him what fire can do and what it can do to him: "A problem gets too burdensome, then into the fire with it. Now, Montag, you're a burden. And fire will lift you off my shoulders, clean, quick, and nothing to rot later." But Montag senses that the wind may change; he need not be Beatty's victim. His link to Faber, the "bug" in his ear falls out and Beatty snatches it up, promising to track down the voice on the other end. Montag makes his crisis decision. He aims the flame thrower at Beatty. Beatty only quotes more literature to Montag, and Montag engulfs him in flame.

After knocking out the other two firemen, Stoneman (aptly named as a man without thought) and Black (like the ashes of the books they burned), Montag ignites the Hound, but not before he is stung by it. With one leg numbed, Montag drags himself into his back yard where he retrieves books to plant in the other firemen's houses. It strikes him that Beatty wanted to die but somehow couldn't until the moment came when he could taunt Montag into immolating him.

Without the radio connection to Faber Montag has simply to get to Faber's house. They have a whiskey, and Montag exchanges his cash for Faber's old clothes. He escapes into nature knowing Faber is taking a bus to St. Louis. Now everything is in flux. No one is where they belonged for so long. Defying the law makes one a fugitive. Ask you students if it is ever okay to defy the law? How can one tell and how can one go about it? The novel is a projection of an extreme in society. Today we are not so close to the edge. Granted, we are fifty

years closer to Bradbury's predictions, but will our society end up like that in the novel? Ask your kids what they think; you should hear a good argument. What was Bradbury trying to convey and how did he do accurately predict so many items and events?

The novel ends on a hopeful note. While the city is decimated by a single bomb reducing it to ashes, Montag is alive with the Book People, led by a man called Granger. These men are all books; that is to say each of them has memorized a book and then burnt it to avoid breaking the law. (In the film Truffaut added women and children to this group.) They live simply, reciting themselves for each other, aware of other small pockets of people in other rural areas. The law cannot touch them.

And so a new beginning has dawned with the early morning. The *new stasis* is established in the face of the ashes of the city. Granger even relates the story of the phoenix to Montag. Montag is ready to go on, feeling a little sad about Millie, and hoping that Faber got out in time. He will go with the Book People and help to rebuild. Granger says society will learn from these mistakes. What's the lesson here? If we are aware enough can we keep the government from passing laws removing our rights? What must we do to stay aware? At this point the kids should realize the value of *knowing* things. Ask the kids and sparks will rise.

Bradbury wrote an *afterword* in the 1979 edition (Random House) in which he addressed all the people who wanted him to make changes in his work. Some wanted more women added, some wanted specific references removed. His response was that his work was his work and that he wasn't going to sugar-coat or water down any of it to appease any minority group. In his opinion *somebody* is going to be offended no matter what you do, so preserve the integrity of your work and don't allow compromises.

Classroom Activities

Day One - The unit will be launched with a short interactive dialogue about The Fourteenth Amendment instigated by the poster which will greet the students upon entering the classroom. Following this, students will wonder why we are studying this in English class. The teacher will lecture briefly on the history of education in this country (see **Introductory Material**) and encourage the students through questioning to make the connection between the forefathers' original intent and the state of education in today's America. Finally, students will receive a syllabus of the unit including a breakdown of the reading and will be assigned a book.

Day Two - To prepare to begin reading the novel, students will need some background information on how to read a novel. An examination of the 1st sentence and 1st paragraph to try to determine the tone and direction of the novel will be demonstrated by the teacher followed by a read-aloud of first section, pp. 3 & 4. Motifs will be discussed with the teacher pointing out the reflections. Then the students will be given them section breakdown- (see Appendix B) and the first homework reading, the six sections between pp. 4 and 22.

Day Three - Part One "The Hearth and the Salamander"- Discuss the six sections from pp. 4-25

Day Four - Discuss the six sections from pp. 25-44

Day Five - Discuss the one section from pp. 44-67

Day Six - Discuss the two sections from pp. 67-73

Day Seven - Part Two- "The Sieve and the Sand"- Discuss the four sections from pp. 77-99

Day Eight - Discuss the three sections from pp. 99-120

Day Nine - Part Three-"Burning Bright"- give take-home test (see Appendix C) Discuss the three sections from pp. 123-136

Day Ten - Discuss the three sections from pp. 136-151

Day Eleven- Discuss the two sections from pp. 151-167

Day Twelve- Discuss the two sections from pp. 167-174

Days Thirteen, Fourteen and Fifteen Watch and complete video response form (see **Appendix D**)

Also on **Day Fifteen** - The student will turn in the take-home exam distributed on Day Nine and be invited to discuss/question any lingering topics not fully addressed in previous class meetings.

Annotated Bibliography/Resources

Annotated teacher bibliography

Abington School District v. Schempp et al. online@

<http://www.tourolaw.edu/PATCH/Abington/>

An account of the Schempp family's 1963 case against school prayer in eastern Pennsylvania.

"American Treasures of the Library of Congress" online @ <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/treasures/trr007.html>

The Library of Congress has provided here a facsimile of the typed opinion of *Brown* with penciled corrections adding "with all deliberate speed" plus a short article celebrating the anniversary of the decision.

Arlington Central School District Board of Education, Plaintiff v. Pearl Murphy et vir, online@

<http://caselaw.lp.findlaw.com/scripts/getcase.pl?court=us&vol=000&invol=05-18>

Pearl Murphy's 2006 case was on behalf of her son in regard to the IDEA and concerned payment for special services.

Ascik, Thomas R., "Congress and the Supreme Court: Court Jurisdiction and School Prayer," online @

<http://www.heritage.org/Research/LegalIssues/bg123.cfm>

This document from June 25, 1980 details the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court in relation to voluntary prayer in schools.

Bradbury, Ray, *Fahrenheit 451*, Random House, New York, 1953

This iconoclastic novel accurately predicted many societal conditions which occurred in the following half century in a cautionary tale

about personal freedom and the future of mankind.

Burley, Christopher, "Supreme Court to Review Americans with Disabilities Act," online @ http://www.bazelon.org/newsroom/archive/2003/11-12-03tenn_v_lane.htm

The *State of Tennessee v. George Lane and Beverly Jones* is described in this article.

Burt, Robert A. *The Constitution in Conflict*, Belknap Press, 1992

Burt's book offers many controversial views on past cases encouraging dialogue and further thought about the Constitution and how it works.

Cozzens, Lisa. "Brown v. Board of Education." *African American History*.

<http://www.fledge.watson.org/~lisa/blackhistory/early-civilrights/brown.html> (25 May 1998).

This article and the one that follows offer insight into the case and the social climate of the time.

Cozzens, Lisa. "The Civil Rights Movement 1955-1965." *African American History*.

<http://www.fledge.watson.org/~lisa/blackhistory/civilrights-55-65> (25 May 1998).

See above

"Early American Education and Horace Mann: An Integrated Unit of Study" online @

<http://www.reacheverychild.com/feature/horace.html>

This site offers a unit on Horace Mann with lessons and study guides.

Engel v. Vitale 370 U.S. 421 (1962) online@

<http://www.oyez.org/oyez/resource/case/111/>

This site offers the abstract in the case of an official, non-denominational school prayer established by the New York Board of Regents.

"The History of Education in America" @ http://www.cbesapeake.edu/Library/EDU_101/eduhist.asp

These lessons break down the history of American education into 4 time periods: Early, Colonial, 19th century, and 20th century.

Kluger, Richard, *Simple Justice*, Vintage Books, 1977

This exhaustive account of the African-American's struggles from his arrival in chains to his triumph in winning the right to equality in education is described in great detail in a readable and entertaining style.

Pierce v. Society of Sisters (1925) online@

<http://www.oyez.org/oyez/resource/case/305>

A brief statement of the case and its conclusion can be found here.

Rehnquist, William H., *The Supreme Court*, Knopf, 2001

Justice Rehnquist's personal memoir is written for the ordinary citizen who wants a glimpse into the inner workings of The Supreme Court. Unencumbered by legal terms and lengthy descriptions with docket numbers, etc., Rehnquist's style is enjoyable and engaging for those not steeped in the legal profession.

School: The Story of American Education, online @

<http://www.pbs.org/kcet/publicschool/>

The site outlines the PBS television series about education and offers information on how to obtain copies of the program

Truffaut, Francois, *Fahrenheit 451*, 1968, DVD version with extras on Universal Home Video, 2003

The film is offered in English or French with commentary by Julie Christie, and interview with Ray Bradbury and other extras discussing the music and filming of the story.

Vonnegut, Kurt, "Harrison Bergeron," McDougell Littell, *The Language of Literature*, Houghton Mifflin, 2002

This short story is included in the tenth grade level of the English textbook.

Wallace v. Jaffree 472 U.S. 38 (1985) online@ <http://www.oyez.org/ovez/resource/case/428/>

Another school prayer case, this time in Alabama.

Wellington, Harry H., *Interpreting the Constitution*, Yale University Press, 1992 This textbook is clear and concise in its intent to explain the Constitution.

Wikipedia online @ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dover_Beach

This encyclopedia offers commentary on Arnold's poem and other literature in which it has been used.

Reading list for students (3)

Bradbury, Ray, *Fahrenheit 451*, Random House, New York, 1953

This iconoclastic novel accurately predicted many societal conditions which occurred in the following half century in a cautionary tale about personal freedom and the future of mankind.

List of Materials for Classroom Use

The Constitution of the United States (decide how to procure and display this), *Fahrenheit 451* books- class set, *Fahrenheit 451* 1966 film-DVD, DVD player and TV monitor, poster of the Fourteenth Amendment for display

Appendix A

Topic suggestions for other high school grade levels:

In the Pittsburgh Public Schools *Fahrenheit 451* is the ancillary text for the first nine week grading period in **tenth grade** mainstream classes. In this case allow additional days for reading either as homework or during class.

For **eleventh grade** there are more possibilities since the junior year is devoted to the study of American literature. The unit could be used to accompany the study of *The Crucible* following or in place of my unit from last year, *Arthur Miller's History Lesson: The Crucible as a Link from the Past through McCarthyism to Present-Day Terrorism*.

For adaptation for a **twelfth grade** English class, plan the unit for January or February to coincide with either Martin Luther King, Jr. Day or Black History Month. You may want to exclude the portions on disability and prayer if you do it that way.

Appendix B

Section breakdown for each of the three parts of *Fahrenheit 451*

(In the past I have repeated this breakdown in three columns and then cut them into strips so the students can use them as bookmarks.)

The novel is divided into three large sections. For ease in discussion please follow the subdivisions as listed below:

The Hearth and the Salamander

pp. 3-4

pp. 4-10

pp. 10-12

pp. 12-15

pp. 15-19

pp. 19-20

pp. 20-22

pp. 22-25

pp. 25-29

pp. 29-33

pp. 33-34

pp. 34-42

pp. 42-43

pp. 43-44

pp. 44-67

pp. 67-68

pp. 68-73

The Sand and the Sieve

pp. 77-82

pp. 82-84

pp. 84-87

pp. 87-99

pp. 99-101

pp. 101-109

pp. 109-120

Burning Bright

pp. 123-127

pp. 127-132

pp. 132-136

pp. 136-140

pp. 140-148

pp. 148-151

pp. 151-157

pp. 157-167

pp. 167-174

pp. 174-184

Appendix C

Take-Home Essay exam for *Fahrenheit 451*

DIRECTIONS: Using your book, video response forms, and any other notes you have respond to ONLY ONE of the items below in an essay of at least five paragraphs. Cite page numbers for your examples from the book

1. Examine the use of motifs in the book. Choose one motif and trace its use throughout all three sections of the book. How effective was this motif? Explain your opinion.
2. Consider the characters of Clarisse and Faber and compare Truffaut's decision to eliminate Faber in the film and carry on with Clarisse. Do you agree with this change for the film? Explain your reasons.
3. Could what happened in *Fahrenheit 451* happen in our world? Offer three concrete examples that support your opinion.

Appendix D

(Add or delete lines as necessary before printing as in item 1.)

Video Comparison Sheet for *Fahrenheit 451* #1

Day One

1. How does the film compare to the novel? Is the film the same or different? If it is different, does it work? Choose an example and explain whether or not you support the filmmaker's choices.
2. How would you describe the music and the way it is used to someone who had not seen the film but had read the book? What does the composer do that is effective?
3. Which character (s) do you like and why? Which character (s) do you dislike and why?

Video Comparison Sheet for *Fahrenheit 451* #2

Day Two

1. How does the music reflect the action? Can you tell what is about to happen through the music? Can you identify any of the instruments?
2. What can you say about the characters of Linda and Clarisse? Do they compare favorably with the impressions you got from reading the book?
3. Have your feelings or opinions about any of the characters changed since yesterday's viewing? Explain why and how.

Video Comparison Sheet for *Fahrenheit 451* #3

Day Three

1. How is the music helping to define the tone of the action? Identify a particular scene in which the music is effective.
2. Have you changed your opinion about the characters (actor portrayals) you liked and disliked since watching Acts I and II? Offer examples and explain.
3. Does the action seem more real and moving when you see it compared to when you read it? Why do you think this is so?
4. Now that you've seen the end of the film what is your overall impression? Would you recommend the film to anyone? Who and why?

Standards Pennsylvania Content Standards for Communications: Reading, Writing, Listening, and Speaking

1. All students use effective research and information management skills, including locating primary and secondary sources of information with traditional and emerging library technologies.
2. All students read and use a variety of methods to make sense of various kinds of complex texts.
3. All students respond orally and in writing to information and ideas gained by reading narrative and informational texts and use the information and ideas to make decisions and solve problems.
4. All students write for a variety of purposes, including narrate, inform, and persuade, in all subject areas.
5. All students analyze and make critical judgments about all forms of communication, separating fact from opinion, recognizing propaganda, stereotypes and statements of bias, recognizing inconsistencies and judging the validity of evidence.
6. All students exchange information orally, including understanding and giving spoken instructions, asking and answering questions appropriately, and promoting effective group communications.
7. All students listen to and understand complex oral messages and identify the purpose, structure and use.
8. All students compose and make oral presentations for each academic area of study that are designed to persuade, inform or describe.
9. All students communicate appropriately in business, work and other applied situations.

Notes

1. *School: The Story of American Education*, online @ <http://www.pbs.org/kcet/publicschool/> reference is on the Home Page of the site
2. Kluger, Richard, *Simple Justice*, Vintage Books, 1977, 1
3. White-Beck, Elouise, personal recollection. I have tried to locate the origin of this theory but to no avail. My memory tells me it was derived from the Faulkner scholar, Olga Vickery and that it was taught to me in a graduate seminar by Dr. Ronald Schumacher at Clarion University (then Clarion State College) of Pennsylvania.
4. Truffaut, Francois, *Fahrenheit 451*, 1968, DVD version with extras on Universal Home Video, 2003. The story is from the Bradbury interview which also includes an explanation of the title and a story about writing the original short story for Hugh Hefner to publish in the very first edition of his new magazine.
5. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dover_Beach, the commentary is on this page.

<https://teachers.yale.edu>

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