Have you completed the previously assigned IXL skills and achieved 90 percent?

Sentence Types, M.1,
Phrases and Clauses, Q.1 and Q.2,
Sentences, Fragments, and Run-ons, P.1, P.2, and P.3,
Phrases and Clauses, Q.3 (appositives and appositive phrases)
Dependent and independent clauses, R.1
Pronouns, AA.1
Adjectives, CC.1
Adjectives and Adverbs, EE.1 and EE.2
Greek and Latin Roots, QQ.1
Apostrophes, D.1
Subject and Predicate, N.1, N.2, N.3
Direct and Indirect Objects, O.1
Verbs, BB.6

This week’s list of assignments on IXL:
Simple, Compound, Complex, and Compound-Complex Sentences, R.1, R.2
Verbs, BB.2

Monday, December 7

Please note: We will thoroughly complete each assignment one at a time. Do not fret over deadlines; we will be flexible and complete as much as we can one day at a time.

_____ Quiz on vocabulary.
_____ Turn in first draft of fractured fairy tale. Peer edit in class this week. Final version, typed, MLA format, is due Tuesday, December 22.
_____ Choice Book Assignment for Trimester Two: With an assigned partner, you will select a book to read together. You will identify important places and key characters and then create a detailed timeline of the story to post on Google Classroom. You need to select a background design that not only helps readers follow the storyline but also has significant meaning on its own. You need to add route maps for each character and a map key that will help others navigate literary maps. Due Date: Friday, March 11.
_____ Today or tomorrow watch video that accompanies lesson/literary map. Display Andrew DeGraff’s literary map for *A Wrinkle in Time* on white board.
_____ Peer edit personal narratives/stories in class this week.
Fahrenheit 451. Distribute handout on seventh-grade dystopian unit. After reading
Fahrenheit 451, you will create a mind map of this book, using mind-mapping software. You
will use the map to discuss the characteristics of dystopian books’ main characters, plot, and
government discussed. Work on your mind map as you finish reading Fahrenheit 451.
In class this week start writing a five-paragraph reflective essay in class that answers the
following questions:

What’s your opinion about dystopian societies?
Has it changed your view/interest on novels based on dystopian cultures?
What are the pros and cons of dystopian societies?
What are some of the issues associated with dystopia?

Reflect on what you know about the topic. Finish as homework and turn in Wednesday,
December 23, typed, MLA format, Times New Roman, 12 point, stapled.

Fahrenheit 451, start Quizlet, part three: https://quizlet.com/8334840/fahrenheit-451-
study-guide-part-3-burning-bright-flash-cards/
Finish peer editing fractured fairy tale and personal narrative this week.

Tuesday, December 8

Finish peer editing fractured fairy tale.

Fahrenheit 451: In class start writing analyses of quotes #1 through #5: Provide page
number where you found the quote. (Did you paginate the book correctly?) Also, include name
of character who is speaking when appropriate. Finish analyses by Tuesday, December 22.
Lesson simple, compound, complex, compound complex sentences and parts of speech.

Wednesday, December 9

Fahrenheit 451. Finish Quizlet, part two: https://quizlet.com/8333713/fahrenheit-451-
study-guide-part-2-seive-of-sand-flash-cards/
Finish peer editing fractured fairy tale and personal narrative this week.

Thursday, December 10

Fahrenheit 451, start Quizlet, part three: https://quizlet.com/8334840/fahrenheit-451-
study-guide-part-3-burning-bright-flash-cards/
Finish peer editing fractured fairy tale and personal narrative this week.

Friday, December 11

Quiz on simple, compound, complex, compound complex sentences and parts of
speech.
Finish peer editing fractured fairy tale and personal narrative this week.

Monday, December 14

Quiz on vocabulary.
Mini lesson on participles.
Fahrenheit 451. Finish Quizlet, part three: https://quizlet.com/8334840/fahrenheit-451-
study-guide-part-3-burning-bright-flash-cards/
Tuesday, December 15

_____ Start assignment on the American Dream. Answer the following questions in class: What is the American Dream? How has the vision of the American Dream been made manifest in literature, music, and art? How has the American Dream changed over time? In what ways is the American dream both utopic and dystopic?

_____ Review participles.

Wednesday, December 16

_____ Continue lesson on American Dream by reading John Winthrop’s idea of the American Dream.

_____ Research Winthrop at The Winthrop Society: www.winthropsociety.com/

Thursday, December 17

_____ Turn in final version of second personal essay/narrative. Use rubric to grade your essay. Place grade on rubric, staple graded rubric to the back of your essay. Times New Roman, 12 point, double-spaced. Story must not exceed three pages. STAPLE BEFORE CLASS OR LOSE TWENTY (20) POINTS.

Friday, December 18

_____ Quiz on participles

Monday, December 21

_____ Quiz on vocabulary.

_____ Hand out list of words for next vocabulary quiz.

Tuesday, December 22

_____ Listen to Neil Diamond’s song “America.” Read the lyrics while you listen, and look for the idea of American Dream in the song. Answer questions on Diamond’s song, then listen to “American Dream” by the Casting Crowns. Answer questions on this song.

_____ Turn in final version of fractured fairy tale. Use rubric to grade your fairy tale. Place grade on rubric, staple graded rubric to the back of your essay. STAPLE BEFORE CLASS OR LOSE TWENTY (20) POINTS.

_____ Fahrenheit 451: Finish writing analyses of quotes #1 through # 5: Provide page number where you found the quote. (Did you paginate the book correctly?) Also, include name of character who is speaking when appropriate. Turn in typed, MLA format, Times New Roman, 12 point.
Wednesday, December 23
Minimum Day

_____ Turn in five-paragraph reflective essay on dystopian societies started on Monday, December 7, in class, MLA format, typed, Times New Roman, 12 point, stapled.
_____ Listen to John F. Kennedy’s speech at:

http://www.jfklibrary.org/AssetTree/AssetViewers/VideoAssetViewer.htm?guid={6D480D13-B87F-4E69-9FC0-638F0D053FD3}&type=Audio

_____ Follow along with the text and look at the collage of pictures from Kennedy’s administration.
_____ Read President-Elect John F. Kennedy’s address delivered to a joint convention of the general court of the commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Winter Recess
Thursday, December 24, through Friday, January 1

March 11
T2

Thursday, March 24, seventh and eighth graders will see The Mousetrap by Dame Agatha Christie at the McCarter Theatre in Princeton, New Jersey.

Completed IXL Assignments:
Sentence Types, M.1
Phrases and Clauses, Q.1 and Q.2, Q.3
Sentences, Fragments, and Run-ons, P.1, P.2, and P.3.
Dependent and independent clauses, R.1
Pronouns, AA.1
Adjectives, CC.1
Adjectives and Adverbs, EE.1 and EE.2
Greek and Latin Roots, QQ.1
Apostrophes, D.1
Subject and Predicate, N.1, N.2, N.3
Direct and Indirect Objects, O.1
Verbs, BB.6

Completed IXL Assignments, Week of December 7
Simple, Compound, Complex, and Compound-Complex Sentences, R.1, R.2
Verbs, BB.2
Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury

Quote #1: “White blurs are house. 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.”

Your Analysis
Provide page number where you found the quote. Also, include name of character who is speaking when appropriate.
Quote #2: “They had this machine. They had two machines really. One of them slid down into your stomach like a black cobra down an echoing well looking for all the old water and the old time gathered there.”

Your Analysis
Provide page number where you found the quote. Also, include name of character who is speaking when appropriate.
Quote #3: “It’s really fun. It’ll be even more fun when we can afford to have the fourth wall installed. How long you figure before we save up and get the fourth wall torn out and a wall-TV put in? It’s only two thousand dollars.”

Your Analysis
Provide page number where you found the quote. Also, include name of character who is speaking when appropriate.
Quote #4: “Do you know why books such as this are so important? Because they have quality. And what does the word quality mean? To me it means texture. This book has pores.”

Your Analysis
Provide page number where you found the quote. Also, include name of character who is speaking when appropriate.
Quote #5: “The sun burnt every day. It burnt Time . . . Time was busy burning the years and the people anyway, without any help from him. So if he burnt things with the firemen and the sun burnt Time, that meant that everything burnt!”

Your Analysis
Provide page number where you found the quote. Also, include name of character who is speaking when appropriate.

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List of Characters

Guy Montag
   The protagonist, an unhappy, complacent man who is 30 years old. He has been a fireman for ten years. He meets Clarisse and finds that her outlook on life is refreshing. Montag goes from fireman/destroyer of books to freedom fighter/book saver. Think Karl Marx embracing free market capitalism or Osama Bin Laden embracing hot dogs and apple pie on the Fourth of July or Johnny Damon leaving the Red Sox and signing with the Yankees.

Mildred Montag (Millie)
   Guy's self-destructive wife, also thirty years old, who reveals to Montag the alienated existence of citizens in his society. She has never wanted children and considers her family to be television characters. She betrays Montag for reading books.

Clarisse McClellan
   Montag's new neighbor, seventeen years old, who calls herself crazy and enjoys conversations. Her recalcitrance and nonconformity allow Montag to discover how jaded his view of life has become. Bradby give Clarisse angelic characteristics. See if you can find them.

Captain Beatty
   The antagonist of the book and Montag's superior, the Fire Captain, who functions as the apologist for the dystopian culture in which Montag lives. He is well read and uses his knowledge of books as a weapon to fight curiosity about them.

Mechanical Hound
   A machine, similar to a trained killer dog that the firefighters use to track down and capture criminals. The Hound disables and kills offenders with a morphine or procaine needle.

Unidentified Woman
   A woman from the ancient part of the city. Her martyrdom reveals to Montag the power of civil disobedience, books, and ideas.

Faber
   An elderly man, a retired English professor who is an underground, though ineffectual, scholar. He becomes Montag's ally and mentor.

Granger
   An ex-writer who is the unacknowledged leader of the social outcasts and criminals. He unites the group to keep the content of books safe.

Stoneman and Black Montag's fellow firemen who are conformists, and conservatives.
   Together with Beatty, they form Montag's familiar working colleagues.

Mrs. Phelps and Mrs. Bowles Millie's friends who do not question the social structure.
   Their husbands are called away to war. They also view the television characters as their families and become agitated when Montag reads to them.

Fred Clement, Dr. Simmons, Professor West, Reverend Padover, and Harris in Youngstown
   Social outcasts and criminals who are led by Granger.
   They choose and memorize a book to ensure that the story is never forgotten.
1. “So it was the hand that started it all... His hands had been infected, and soon it would be his arms... His hands were ravenous.”

This passage from “The Hearth and the Salamander” refers to Montag’s theft of books from the old woman’s house. Montag guiltily portrays his actions as an involuntary bodily reflex. He describes his crime as automatic and claims it involves no thought on his part. He blames his hands for several other crimes in the course of the book, and they become a powerful symbol for Montag’s instincts of rebellion, will, and moral imperative. Montag’s thoughtless actions here are akin to Mildred’s unconscious overdose, as they are the result of some hidden sense of dissatisfaction within him that he does not consciously acknowledge. Montag regards his hands as infected from stealing the book and describes how the “poison works its way into the rest of his body.” Montag uses the word “poison” to refer to his strong sense of guilt and wrongdoing. Later, the novel incorporates a reference to Shakespeare, as Montag compulsively washes his hands at the fire station in an attempt to cleanse his guilt. His feeling they are “gloved in blood” is a clear reference to Lady Macbeth. Montag’s hands function as a symbol of defiance and thirst for truth.

2. “We must all be alike. Not everyone born free and equal, as the constitution says, but everyone made equal... A book is a loaded gun in the house next door. Burn it. Take the shot from the weapon. Breach man’s mind.”

Captain Beatty speaks these lines toward the end of “The Hearth and the Salamander” while explaining the revisionist history of firemen to Montag in his home. It is important to note that Beatty’s whole speech has an ironic sound. He defends the disintegration of authenticity in a passionate, almost regretful tone. He is willing to defend the “equalization” of society while still remaining educated himself, and denounces the use of books as weapons while freely using them that way himself. Because of these ambiguities, Beatty is the most complex character in the book, and he uses his book-educated mind, his “loaded gun,” to manipulate Montag mercilessly. One wonders, as Faber does, if he chose his job after a fall from faith in books, as he claims, or to enable himself to gain legal access to books through his position of authority.

3. “Do you know why books such as this are so important? Because they have quality. And what does the word quality mean? To me it means texture. This book has pores.”

Faber speaks these words to Montag toward the beginning of “The Sieve and the Sand,” as he explains the importance of books. Faber tells Montag that it’s not the books themselves that Montag is looking for, but the meaning they contain. The same meaning could be included in existing media like television and radio, but people no longer demand it. According to Faber, Montag is really in search of “quality,” which the professor defines as “texture”—the details of life, that is, authentic experience. People need quality information, the leisure to digest it, and the freedom to act on what has been learned. Faber’s comment that a book has “pores” also evokes the sieve in the title “The Sieve and the Sand.” Trying to fill your mind by reading books is like trying to fill a leaking bucket, because the words slip from your memory before you can even finish reading anything.
4. “It’s perpetual motion; the thing man wanted to invent but never did. . . . It’s a mystery. . . . Its real beauty is that it destroys responsibility and consequences . . . clean, quick, sure; nothing to rot later. Antibiotic, aesthetic, practical.”

Beatty speaks these lines to Montag outside Montag’s home in “Burning Bright,” right before Montag burns him to death with the flamethrower. He muses about the mystical nature of fire, its unexplained beauty, and the fascination it holds for people. With characteristic irony, Beatty, who has just accused Montag of not considering the consequences of his actions, then defines the beauty of fire as its ability to destroy consequences and responsibilities. What he describes is very nearly a cult of fire, a fitting depiction of their society’s devotion to cleanliness and destruction. Unfortunately, Montag turns Beatty’s philosophy against him by turning the flamethrower on his boss, inflicting an “antibiotic, aesthetic, practical” death.

5. ”The sun burnt every day. It burnt Time . . . Time was busy burning the years and the people anyway, without any help from him. So if he burnt things with the firemen and the sun burnt Time, that meant that everything burnt!”

In this passage, Montag muses on the sun as he escapes the city and floats down the river in “Burning Bright.” Montag sees the stars for the first time in years, and he finally enjoys the leisure to think that Faber told him he would need in order to regain his life. He starts by considering the moon, which gets its light from the sun, then considers that the sun is akin to time and burns with its own fire. If the sun burns time (and, thus, burns away the years and the people) and he and the firemen continue to burn, everything will burn. These thoughts lead him to the conclusion that since the sun will not stop burning, he and the firemen must stop. In these lines, Bradbury repeats the word “burning” to communicate the sense of revelation that Montag experiences as he considers this and to subtly suggest that the ex-fireman must now redefine his ingrained conceptions of fire and burning, and, therefore, his identity and purpose.
Themes

Themes are the fundamental and often universal ideas explored in a literary work.

Censorship

_Fahrenheit 451_ doesn’t provide a single, clear explanation of why books are banned in the future. Instead, it suggests that many different factors could combine to create this result. These factors can be broken into two groups: factors that lead to a general lack of interest in reading and factors that make people actively hostile toward books. The novel doesn’t clearly distinguish these two developments. Apparently, they simply support one another.

The first group of factors includes the popularity of competing forms of entertainment such as television and radio. More broadly, Bradbury thinks that the presence of fast cars, loud music, and advertisements creates a lifestyle with too much stimulation in which no one has the time to concentrate. Also, the huge mass of published material is too overwhelming to think about, leading to a society that reads condensed books (which were very popular at the time Bradbury was writing) rather than the real thing.

The second group of factors, those that make people hostile toward books, involves envy. People don’t like to feel inferior to those who have read more than they have. But the novel implies that the most important factor leading to censorship is the objections of special-interest groups and “minorities” to things in books that offend them. Bradbury is careful to refrain from referring specifically to racial minorities—Beatty mentions dog lovers and cat lovers, for instance. The reader can only try to infer which special-interest groups he really has in mind.

As the Afterword to _Fahrenheit 451_ demonstrates, Bradbury is extremely sensitive to any attempts to restrict his free speech; for instance, he objects strongly to letters he has received suggesting that he revise his treatment of female or black characters. He sees such interventions as essentially hostile and intolerant—as the first step on the road to book burning.

Knowledge versus Ignorance

Montag, Faber, and Beatty’s struggle revolves around the tension between knowledge and ignorance. The fireman’s duty is to destroy knowledge and promote ignorance in order to equalize the population and promote sameness. Montag’s encounters with Clarisse, the old woman, and Faber ignite in him the spark of doubt about this approach. His resultant search for knowledge destroys the unquestioning ignorance he used to share with nearly everyone else, and he battles the basic beliefs of his society.
Motifs

Motifs are recurring structures, contrasts, and literary devices that can help to develop and inform the text’s major themes.

Paradoxes

In the beginning of “The Hearth and the Salamander,” Montag’s bedroom is described first as “not empty” and then as “indeed empty,” because Mildred is physically there, but her thoughts and feelings are elsewhere. Bradbury’s repeated use of such paradoxical statements—especially that a character or thing is dead and alive or there and not there—is frequently applied to Mildred, suggesting her empty, half-alive condition. Bradbury also uses these paradoxical statements to describe the “Electric-Eyed Snake” stomach pump and, later, the Mechanical Hound. These paradoxes question the reality of beings that are apparently living but spiritually dead. Ultimately, Mildred and the rest of her society seem to be not much more than machines, thinking only what they are told to think. The culture of Fahrenheit 451 is a culture of insubstantiality and unreality, and Montag desperately seeks more substantial truths in the books he hoards.

Animal and Nature Imagery

Animal and nature imagery pervades the novel. Nature is presented as a force of innocence and truth, beginning with Clarisse’s adolescent, reverent love for nature. She convinces Montag to taste the rain, and the experience changes him irrevocably. His escape from the city into the country is a revelation to him, showing him the enlightening power of unspoiled nature. Much of the novel’s animal imagery is ironic. Although this society is obsessed with technology and ignores nature, many frightening mechanical devices are modeled after or named for animals, such as the Electric-Eyed Snake machine and the Mechanical Hound.

Religion

Fahrenheit 451 contains a number of religious references. Mildred’s friends remind Montag of icons he once saw in a church and did not understand. The language Bradbury uses to describe the enameled, painted features of the artifacts Montag saw is similar to the language he uses to describe the firemen’s permanent smiles. Faber invokes the Christian value of forgiveness: after Montag turns against society, Faber reminds him that since he was once one of the faithful, he should demonstrate pity rather than fury.

The narrative also contains references to the miracle at Cana, where Christ transformed water into wine. Faber describes himself as water and Montag as fire, asserting that the merging of the two will produce wine. In the biblical story, Jesus Christ’s transformation of water into wine was one of the miracles that proved his identity and instilled faith in his role as the savior.

Montag longs to confirm his own identity through a similar self-transformation. The references to fire are more complex. In the Christian tradition, fire has several meanings: from the pagan blaze in which the golden calf was made to Moses’ burning bush, it symbolizes both blatant heresy and divine presence. Fire in Fahrenheit 451 also possesses contradictory meanings. At the beginning it is the vehicle of a restrictive society, but Montag turns it upon his oppressor, using it to burn Beatty and win his freedom.
Finally, Bradbury uses language and imagery from the Bible to resolve the novel. In the last pages, as Montag and Granger’s group walk upriver to find survivors after the bombing of the city, Montag knows they will eventually talk, and he tries to remember appropriate passages from the Bible. He brings to mind Ecclesiastes 3:1, “To everything there is a season,” and also Revelations 22:2, “And on either side of the river was there a tree of life . . . and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations,” which he decides to save for when they reach the city. The verse from Revelations also speaks of the holy city of God, and the last line of the book, “When we reach the city,” implies a strong symbolic connection between the atomic holocaust of Montag’s world and the Apocalypse of the Bible.

Symbols

Symbols are objects, characters, figures, and colors used to represent abstract ideas or concepts.

Blood

Blood appears throughout the novel as a symbol of a human being’s repressed soul or primal, instinctive self. Montag often “feels” his most revolutionary thoughts welling and circulating in his blood. Mildred, whose primal self has been irretrievably lost, remains unchanged when her poisoned blood is replaced with fresh, mechanically administered blood by the Electric-Eyed Snake machine. The symbol of blood is intimately related to the Snake machine. Bradbury uses the electronic device to reveal Mildred’s corrupted insides and the thick sediment of delusion, misery, and self-hatred within her. The Snake has explored “the layer upon layer of night and stone and stagnant spring water,” but its replacement of her blood could not rejuvenate her soul. Her poisoned, replaceable blood signifies the empty lifelessness of Mildred and the countless others like her.

“The Hearth and the Salamander”

Bradbury uses this conjunction of images as the title of the first part of Fahrenheit 451. The hearth, or fireplace, is a traditional symbol of the home; the salamander is one of the official symbols of the firemen, as well as the name they give to their fire trucks. Both of these symbols have to do with fire, the dominant image of Montag’s life—the hearth because it contains the fire that heats a home, and the salamander because of ancient beliefs that it lives in fire and is unaffected by flames.

“The Sieve and the Sand”

The title of the second part of Fahrenheit 451, “The Sieve and the Sand,” is taken from Montag’s childhood memory of trying to fill a sieve with sand on the beach to get a dime from a mischievous cousin and crying at the futility of the task. He compares this memory to his attempt to read the whole Bible as quickly as possible on the subway in the hope that, if he reads fast enough, some of the material will stay in his memory. Simply put, the sand is a symbol of the tangible truth Montag seeks, and the sieve the human mind seeking a truth that remains elusive and, the metaphor suggests, impossible to grasp in any permanent way.

The Phoenix

After the bombing of the city, Granger compares mankind to a phoenix that burns itself up and then rises out of its ashes over and over again. Man’s advantage is his ability to recognize when he has made a mistake, so that eventually he will learn not to make that mistake anymore. Remembering the mistakes of the past is the task Granger and his group have set for themselves. They believe that individuals are not as important as the collective mass of culture and history. The symbol of the phoenix’s rebirth refers not only to the cyclical nature of history and the collective rebirth of humankind but also to Montag’s spiritual resurrection.
Mirrors

At the very end of the novel, Granger says they must build a mirror factory to take a long look at themselves; this remark recalls Montag’s description of Clarisse as a mirror in “The Hearth and the Salamander.” Mirrors here are symbols of self-understanding, of seeing oneself clearly.

What is the main theme in Fahrenheit 451?

You might think that book burning is the main theme in Ray Bradbury's 1953 novel, but try expanding on that idea. Burning books is the destruction of individual thought that is printed on paper — or, in one word, censorship.

Set in the twenty-fourth century, Fahrenheit 451 introduces a new world in which the media controls the masses, and overpopulation and censorship have taken over. The individual is not accepted and the intellectual is considered an outlaw. Television (on huge screens) has replaced the common perception of family, and people plug small radios into their ears to escape the dreariness of everyday reality. (Wow . . . see anything familiar in that last sentence?)

In this setting, books are considered evil because they make people question and think. All intellectual curiosity and hunger for knowledge must be quelled for the good of the state — for conformity. Without ideas, everyone conforms, and as a result, everyone should be happy. When books and new ideas are available to people, conflict and unhappiness occur. Fahrenheit 451 is explicit in its warnings and moral lessons aimed at the present. Bradbury believes that human society can easily become oppressive and regimented — unless it changes its present tendency toward censorship (suppression of an individual's innate rights).
Admonishing Power

Neil Gaiman in his preface in the 60th anniversary edition of Ray Bradbury’s *Fahrenheit 451* writes, “Sometimes writers write about a world that does not yet exist.” Bradbury’s “prescience about technology and its role in isolating humans from each other” (Gaiman 1) remains relevant today. Acknowledging the proliferation of what he calls “giant screens,” Bradbury forewarns society of popular cultures’ consequences. Through his portrayal of a dystopian country that fears the influence of the written word and prioritizes “walls,” or television, Bradbury makes his purpose for writing *Fahrenheit 451* clear.

Having experienced an era of technological advancement, Ray Bradbury uses the geopolitical events of his lifetime to write *Fahrenheit 451*. The United States unveiled the power of a new weapon in 1945 when it dropped two atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in the final stages of World War II. From this point on, countries looking to demonstrate their supremacy focused on the development of thermonuclear weaponry. Inevitably, a crucial part of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union in the 1950’s became the nuclear arms race. In this “race,” both sides amassed thousands of nuclear weapons with their funding of scientific research. Furthermore, the 1950’s saw improvements in television sets. Colored televisions become more prevalent. In response, Bradbury wrote his novel to illuminate the effects of television. In *Fahrenheit 451*, Bradbury predicts a dystopian future which is currently unfolding. His uncanny prophecy is extremely relevant to today’s society. The concerns he discusses in the novel and the concerns of many people in modern society remain the same. Technology has continued to
grow and still captures people’s attention. For example, the WildCat, a robot “that can run at 16 mph, untethered, in the real world,” is similar to the Mechanical Hound in the novel. Despite there being no “dog robots” when Bradbury wrote the novel, his thoughts on the capacity of technology are accurate. Not only are his predictions about its capacity precise but also his warnings about the influence of technology on people’s behavior are correct.

The popularity of television has grown exponentially since the publication of *Fahrenheit 451*. With this prodigious growth come changes in people’s lifestyles. Viewer’s social interactions become limited while television replaces them. Rather than physically attending events, families gather around a television screen and ignore the world around them. Bradbury emphasizes his concern with the detrimental outcomes of an invasive technology. Through his portrayal of “walls” and “family,” or television and fictional characters, Bradbury gives his readers a glimpse into the future of human relations. He depicts Mildred, the wife of the protagonist Guy Montag, as a robotic and detached person who is obsessed with television. As a result, after Montag saves Mildred from an overdose on sleeping pills, he reevaluates his relationship with his wife. Montag thinks to himself, “…if she died, he was certain he wouldn’t cry. For it would be the dying of and unknown, a street face, a newspaper image, and it was suddenly so very wrong that he had begun to cry, not at death but at the thought of *not crying* at death, a silly empty man near a silly empty woman…” (Bradbury 41). Mildred’s constant engagement to technology brings upon her emptiness. She constantly connects to the “wall,” yet gradually disconnects from her husband. David Seed, a professor of American Literature at Liverpool University, describes the origin of the couple’s aloof relationship. He writes, “*Fahrenheit 451* dramatizes the effects of the media as substitutions. Millie finds an ersatz intimacy with the ‘family’ on the screen which contrasts markedly with her relation to Montag” (Bloom 79). Inevitably, the excess of technology in Mildred’s life forces her into passivity and eliminates her ability to interact with Montag as her husband. The effects of technology on the
Montags’ lives serve as a warning. Bradbury reveals television’s dangerous potential to trump human interaction.

While Bradbury emphasizes the ruination of interaction, he also exposes how technology can prevent people from thinking critically. The instant gratification, which comes from the “walls,” allows people in Bradbury’s dystopian society to mindlessly absorb information rather than analytically develop their own ideas. When Mildred and her friends gather at the house to watch the latest television program, Montag reads them a poem. Mrs. Bowles, Mildred’s friend, cries, “...poetry and tears, poetry and suicide and crying and awful feelings, poetry and sickness; all that mush!” (Bradbury 97). Mrs. Bowles immediately relates poetry with profanity. Her response is simply a side effect of her addiction to television. She has completely lost the ability to have her own emotions, to think for herself, and to interpret the world around her. Instead, the monotonous shows she routinely watches obstruct her from developing her own unique ideas. The reaction of Mrs. Bowles represents decline of thought from overuse of technology. “People grow unwillingly to give up their pleasures, even momentarily, by thinking deeply about anything, and they also become unwilling to violate the norms of society by expressing any original thought,” describes literary critic Rafeeq O. McGiveron (Bloom 110). McGiveron explains how technology makes people complacent to a point where they no longer feel obligated to think independently. Bradbury expresses his fear that society will lose its ability to develop new thoughts as a result of too much technology.

Further illuminating this decline of thought, Bradbury portrays Clarisse McClellan. Clarisse’s inquisitive personality significantly contrasts with Mrs. Bowles’ mindless one. Clarisse, a seventeen-year-old girl who is new to town, provokes thought in Montag. She is a curious girl who is naturally inclined to ask questions and think about her environment. “I rarely watch the ‘parlor walls’...So I’ve lots of time for crazy thoughts,” elaborates Clarisse (Bradbury 7). She stands out in their society because of her need to reflect. Consequently,
Clarisse’s peers perceive her as an outcast. Clarisse explains, “I’m antisocial, they say. I don’t mix…” (Bradbury27). Ironically, those who see her as “antisocial” do so because she asks questions and enjoys talking to others in deep conversation. Unlike the technology-absorbed society around her, Clarisse is inquisitive about nature and seeks to learn new concepts. Bradbury introduces her into the novel so readers can see the difference between those who value thought and those who have become preoccupied with technology.

Additionally, Bradbury incorporates drug abuse to demonstrate the harmful effects of technology. For example, “…the act itself [drug abuse] also reveals the nervous behavior of a mind mechanically avoiding thought,” acknowledges McGiveron (Bloom 118). As McGiveron suggests, people in Bradbury’s dystopian society abuse drugs to ensure they are not actively thinking when they are not watching television. Mildred subconsciously overdoses on her sleeping pills so she can escape thought. “Maybe you took two pills and forgot and took two more, and forgot again and took two more, and were so dopey you kept right on until you had thirty or forty of them in you,” proposes Montag to Mildred (Bradbury 17). Mildred has become so accustomed to watching television that she is unable to recognize that she is actually trying to evade thought. Bradbury portrays drug abuse as an outcome of technology allowing users not to think.

Meanwhile, there are experts who argue that television, especially educational television, can be constructive. For example, the American Academy of Pediatrics “has recognized that…television programming has benefits.” In addition, education pundits believe television can help youngsters and adults learn about a variety of subjects, especially by watching documentaries and nature shows. There is even an argument that children can develop analytical skills by discussing media. “Media truly can have a positive effect on children, but it is up to the parents, caregivers and educators in their lives to ensure that kids’ viewing experiences are enriching and not damaging,” says Carey Bryson, a TV expert. Without proper
supervision, television can negatively impact a human being. Indeed, not all television and other forms of video entertainment promote healthy living and environmental awareness. For instance, in South Korea, “one of the world’s most wired societies, addiction to online games has long been treated as a teenage affliction,” reports Choe Sang-Hun in *The New York Times*. In South Korea in 2005, a 28-year-old man died after playing online games for 50 hours straight. In *Fahrenheit 451*, Mildred, similar to the addicts in South Korea, begins to lose her memory after excessive watching; indeed, at one point, she almost dies. Montag “couldn’t believe he knew her at all” (Bradbury 39). Watching television for Millie and others who are addicted can be detrimental to the brain. Television continues to send the wrong messages about violence, drug use, and other negative behaviors. There is even documentation that television and video games promote sedentary behavior that can lead to obesity. The number of eyeballs watching mindless reality TV is staggering. For instance, according to WordPress.com, 57% of all programs on TV are reality shows. Television and other forms of media have the potential to tragically influence the way human beings live their lives, fulfilling Bradbury’s projection.

In writing *Fahrenheit 451*, Bradbury aims to warn readers about the power of technology. He proposes that when this “power” is unleashed, human interactions will be altered; people will no longer think independently, and users may turn to destructive habits. By simply watching a screen, people submissively take in information. Bradbury believes technology can be responsible for the destruction of society. The relevance of Bradbury’s message has grown since its publication. The world is currently experiencing the Information Age, a computer revolution. At their fingertips, people can use technology to message friends, to purchase goods, and to acquire new knowledge. It appears as if users are taking full advantage of technology’s features. However, technology may be gaining control over these users. Douglas Rushkoff, a media theorist, informs, “The less involved and aware we are of the
way our technologies are programmed and program themselves, the more narrow our choices will become…and the more our lives and experiences will be dictated by their biases” (Rushkoff 148). Rushkoff exhorts human beings to “direct technology” and not allow technology to direct civilization. Society cannot allow technology to overtake its decisions and destiny. Readers must view Fahrenheit 451 as a possible consequence of their ignorance to programming technology. People have the option to become mindful users or mindless Mildreds. Users must decide if they will control technology or technology will control them. As T. S. Eliot, the poet, once said, “Television is a medium of entertainment which permits millions of people to listen to the same joke at the same time, and yet remain lonesome.”
Works Cited


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