

Ray Bradbury,

FAHRENHEIT 451

„Fahrenheit 451: The temperature at which book-paper catches fire and burns“

- Date of publication:** 1954
Type of story: Science Fiction Novel
Main characters:
- **Guy Montag:** he is the main character of the story; works as a fireman first but then discovers the worth of books and turns to a rebel.
 - **Clarisse McClellan:** makes Montag think. She describes herself as „17 and crazy“. By others she's called anti-sozial, but on her opinion she isn't.
 - **Captain Beatty:** He is the captain of the firemen. He has read a lot but fights against books now. First he is a friend of Montag but then he turns into his greatest enemy.
 - **Professor Faber:** An ancient English-professor. Montag convinces him to help him with his fight against the firemen.
 - **Mildred Montag:** Montag's wife, who believes in the social system and turns herself against her husband, when he lets her see the books he has stolen.
 - **Granger:** kind of leader of the dissidents.

Interpretation:

„Fahrenheit 451“ is a classic Science Fiction novel. Its plot is built up chronologically and not very complex. The characters are well-drawn although not directly characterized. The characterisation is made mainly by direct speeches of the characters and their acting.

Plot:

The story takes place some time in the future, when Guy Montag works as a fireman in a big city. It is his job to burn books, which are forbidden in this society, because people consider them as dangerous. In this society it is the main target of the people to have fun, which excludes on their opinion, reading books about philosophy, poetry etc, because these things make people think and that's not fun, in their point of few. Also Guy Montag supports this system but for a strange reason he has started to steal books whenever he and the other fireman are out to burn a house, in which books are suspected. Montag first hides the books without even looking at them but one day he meets Clarisse McClellan, the 17 years old daughter from his neighbors. This girl talks to him without being afraid and shows him how to look at the world. She shows him things like the moon and nature itself and Montag starts thinking and when he comes home he remembers the books he hid, but he bans the thought of them. Day by day Clarisse accompanies him on his way to work and this girl leaves an impression on him. But one day Clarisse is not there any more. He worries about the girl who is so different to all the others. However when he comes home another four days later, after a hard day at work he is completely puzzled. The reason for this is, that that day a woman committed suicide, when they burned her house full of books. She simply kept standing in there and wouldn't go out. This night, Montag is not able to sleep and starts thinking of Clarisse again. So he asks his wife, Mildred whether she knows what happened to the girl. Mildred answers that she has forgotten to tell him, but that Clarisse is dead, run over by a car. Montag is very desperate and decides not to go to work the next day. When Captain Beatty comes to see if he is alright, he talks to him and Montag asks, what would happen to a fireman who took a book home. Beatty tells him, that once in his career nearly every fireman happens to do so and he says, that if this fireman will burn the book within 24 hours nothing will happen to him. Then he leaves. Now Beatty nows, that Montag has stolen a book and his wife discovers it under his pillow. So Montag decides to show all the books to his wife, who is shocked. But while they are looking at the books, there is someone at the door and it turns out, that it is the mechanical Hound from the fire station. It can nose the books and the people but Montag doesn't realize that fact. He decides that he has to ask for help and calls a former English professor, he once met by chance. When he goes to see him finally he takes a bible with him. They make up a plan on how to fight against the system. This plan says, that they'll hide books in houses of firemen and then alert the other firemen. To stay in contact Faber gives Montag a seashell for his ear, which is a small transmitter and they can talk to each other by using this little item. However they don't manage to put their plan into reality because the next who is accused of owning books is Montag himself. His wife Mildred alerted the fireman. They force Montag to burn his house on his own, before they would arrest him. So Montag burns everything but then decides to flee. Captain Beatty finds the seashell in Montag's ear and threatens him that he would find his helper. That's why Montag kills Beatty. He also manages to beat the mechanical Hound and flees to Faber's. When he arrives there, the whole town is already alerted and they search for him everywhere but with Faber's help he manages to escape to the river, on which he lets himself flow down. Somewhere far away from the city he gets out and finds a group of dissidents sitting around a fire. They already attended him, because they

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have a small TV and saw the hunt, which is shown live. Their leader, Granger, introduces Montag to all the men and tells him that they have developed a possibility to recall everything they have read once, so no book they have ever read is lost. That is why Montag, who has read a few books, too, is very important to them. Granger also tells him about the war, which is coming. The people in the city don't realize it, because they have the illusion that they'll win it anyway, at least the media tells them so. Then suddenly the jets, which are flying over the town steadily start to bomb and the whole city and everyone who lived in it is destroyed. Montag thinks of Clarisse, Faber and his wife but then realizes that Clarisse is dead anyway and that Faber has left the town shortly after he himself did. And his wife... for any reason he doesn't feel anything about her death. Then the group of dissidents start their way to the destroyed city to help building it up again. And maybe they will be able to form a new society because now, the people will listen.

My opinion:

In my opinion this is a great book, which everyone should have read once. For it was written in 1953 the picture of the future drawn by the author is not very realistic, but nevertheless the impression of this society is quite scary. However the book was not too easy to read, because Bradbury uses a lot of seldom-used words. But obviously the use of these words make his language in a way very colourful and a pleasure to read.
