

Fahrenheit 451

Author
Ray Bradbury

Year Published
1953

Original Language
English

THEMES

Censorship and Technology

Discussion of *Fahrenheit 451* is often about government repression, but Bradbury said that "*Fahrenheit 451* is less about Big Brother and more about Little Sister." Key plot points in the novel center around censorship and technology, revealing how people are prevented from reading—but also no longer interested in it.

TECHNOLOGY

CENSORSHIP

Hearth and the Salamander

Wall-sized TVs, in-ear radios, and TV "families" have resulted in a society no longer curious about books.



Tasked with burning books, Guy Montag is shocked when a woman chooses to burn with her library.

Sieve and the Sand

Montag's wife, Mildred, chooses her TV family over her husband, reporting him to authorities.



Montag must go to the fringes of society to find someone who can help him understand books he has stolen.

Burning Bright

The idyllic commune to which Montag escapes is the antithesis of the doomed, technology-dependent city.



When the city is destroyed by bombs, the commune returns to forge a new society in which books are celebrated, not censored.

Symbols

Salamander

Symbolizes fire and survival, and evokes mythic fire-breathing lizards

Seashells

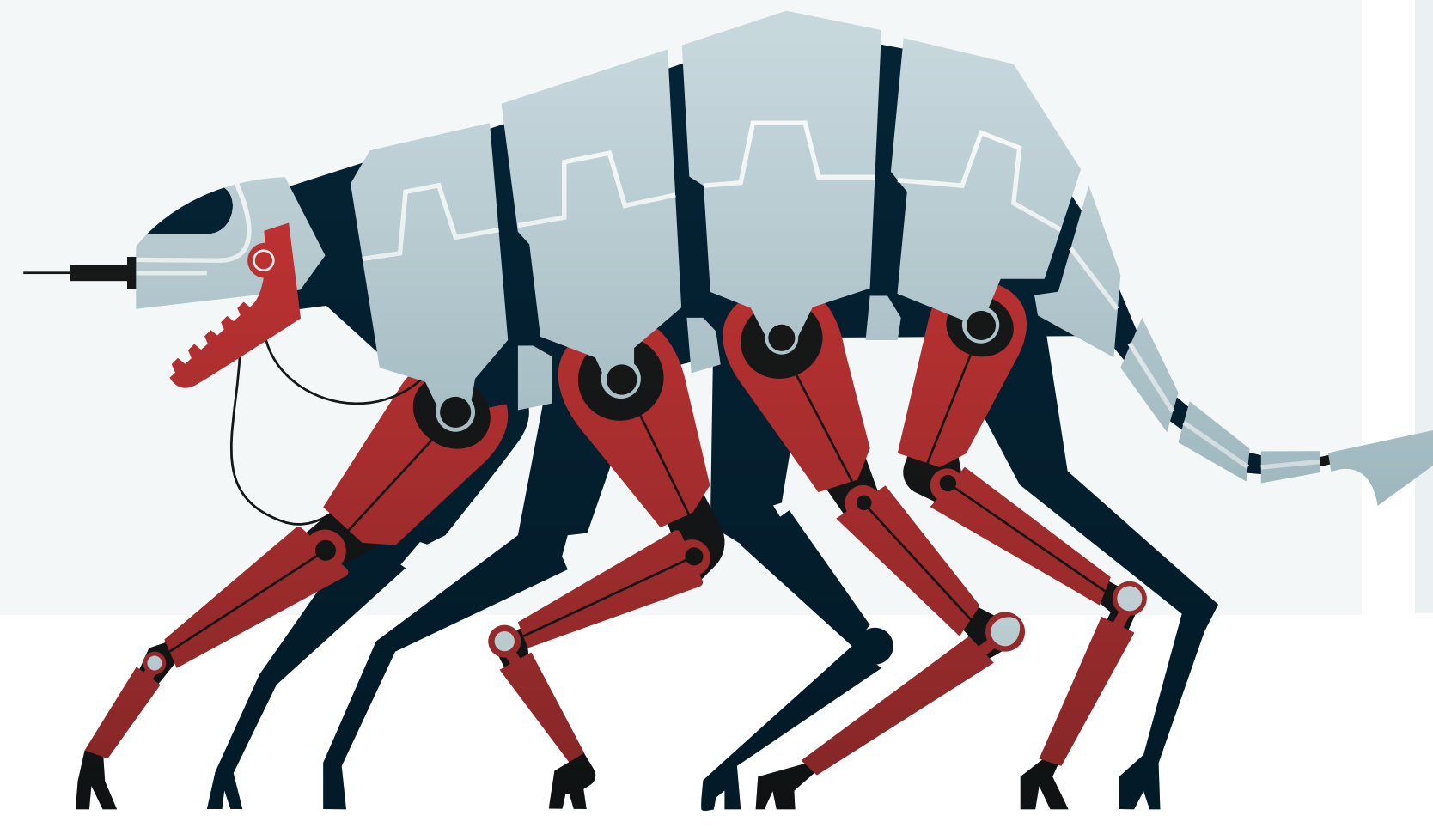
In-ear radio that symbolizes escapism and using technology as a way to tune out

Phoenix

Symbolizes struggle, destruction, and rebirth; appears early as a symbol of Montag's firemen, but is echoed at the book's close when society must be reborn after the city's destruction

The Mechanical Hound

Symbolizes mindless violence, government control, and terror



RAY BRADBURY
1920-2012

Author

A beloved and controversial author, Bradbury infused science fiction with social commentary in his many stories and novels. Adamantly opposed to technology, he was vocal later in life that *Fahrenheit 451* was not so much about censorship as how television destroys interest in literature and other intellectual pursuits.

Overview

Fahrenheit 451 follows the journey of Guy Montag, a fireman whose job is to burn books. After his young neighbor Clarisse opens his eyes to the distractions and technology that have drawn people away from intellectual freedom, he ultimately joins the fight to preserve books and rebuild a free, creative, and thoughtful society.

Main Characters

Fahrenheit 451 by the Numbers

451°

The (fictional) temperature at which book paper combusts, as shared in the story

\$9.80

Amount Bradbury spent on a "dime-at-a-time" typewriter during the 9 days it took him to write the novel

2011

The year Bradbury finally allowed *Fahrenheit 451* to be published as an ebook

Mildred Montag
Montag's estranged wife

Beatty
Firehouse captain & Montag's boss

Montag
Fireman whose job is to burn books

Clarisse McClellan
Montag's 17-year-old neighbor and friend

Faber
Former English professor & Montag's mentor

Granger
Leader of the outcast intellectuals who memorize books

We need not to be let alone. We need to be really bothered once in a while. How long is it since you were really bothered? About something important, about something real?

Part One: The Hearth and the Salamander