

AP Literature and Composition: Summer Literary Assignment

- **Read** *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury.
- **Take notes** under two or more categories for each chapter of the book. (See detailed annotation instructions and template below.)
- **Answer** the comprehension and analysis questions that follow to the best of your ability.
- **Share** the document with me (or bring it to class in August) when you have read the book and completed the written assignments below. Carol Anne Elwell

*Within the first couple of weeks of AP Literature, there will be a comprehension test and one or two in-class writing assignments based on this book. This is a book that frequently appears on the AP Lit Exam and that has great material to use in your Q3 response.

Ray Bradbury was an American author who transcended a single genre, blending science fiction, fantasy, horror, and mystery fiction to create a distinct, poetic style.

Annotating *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury is crucial for understanding its dense thematic layers, symbolism, and societal commentary. Effective annotation categories include tracking character development, identifying recurring motifs, analyzing literary devices, and exploring major themes.

I. Detailed Instructions on Annotating Fahrenheit 451:

To help guide you through the process of annotating a novel, I have provided a **template below**. You may either print out the template to (neatly) take notes on as you read, or you may simply type up your notes. As you read, if you come across a part that you think falls under one of the categories below, then please note...

- the phrase or sentence that caught your attention, and speaker
- the PAGE NUMBER
- a THOUGHT or observation you have about how that part fits in the category.

For an example of what I mean, see the first category on the following page:

Category 1 - Themes

Themes are the universal ideas, lessons, or underlying messages about life or human nature that a story communicates.

REMEMBER: Note the phrase or sentence(s) and speaker, the p#, the observation

1. **Censorship vs. Free Thought:** (Note instances where the government, society, or technology restricts knowledge or individual expression.)

Quote: "It didn't come from the Government down. There was no dictum, no declaration, no censorship, to start with, no! Technology, mass exploitation, and minority pressure carried the trick, thank God." (Captain Beatty)

P#: Page 58

Observation: Censorship began when people chose comfort over conflict. To avoid offense, technology and "special interest groups" narrowed information until books were feared as "loaded guns" that threatened equality.

2. **Technology's Influence:** (Highlight scenes showing how technology—e.g., parlor walls, seashells—acts as a distraction, creates emotional distance, or replaces human connection.)

3. **Knowledge vs. Ignorance:** (Mark examples where characters choose comfortable ignorance over the painful, complicated truths found in books.)

4. **Conformity vs. Individuality:** (Trace how characters are forced to act alike, or how individuals like Clarisse McClellan or Montag rebel against conformity.)

5. **Distraction vs. Happiness:** (Analyze the irony of a society that claims to be happy while being deeply disturbed, empty, or suicidal (like Mildred).)

Category 2 - Symbols and Motifs

A **symbol** is a hidden meaning in an object. A **motif** is a pattern of symbols (or ideas) that keeps coming back to tell you what the story is *really* about.

REMEMBER: Note the phrase or sentence(s) and speaker, the p#, the observation

1. **Fire**

2. **The Phoenix & Salamander**

3. **Books & Nature**

4. **Mirrors & Reflection**

5. **The Sieve & the Sand**

Category 3 - Character Development / Relationships

Character development is the process of a fictional character changing, growing, or becoming more complex throughout a story. It is how a character's personality, outlook, or motivations evolve due to events in the plot, turning them from a simple, one-dimensional sketch into a believable, "3D" person.

REMEMBER: Note the phrase or sentence(s) and speaker, the p#, the observation

1. **Guy Montag's Transformation:** (Trace his evolution from a content, "ignorant" fireman to a rebellious "seeker" of knowledge.)

2. **Foil Characters:** Contrast Clarisse (innocence/curiosity) with Mildred (superficiality/conformity).

A **foil character** is one whose traits sharply contrast with another's – most often the protagonist's – to draw attention to that character's defining strengths, flaws, or values. A character can tell you who they are, but put them beside someone wildly different and suddenly their true nature shines brighter. (ex: Draco Malfoy beside Harry Potter)

3. **Captain Beatty's Contradiction:** (Mark moments showing Beatty's extensive knowledge, which he uses to justify the destruction of books.)

4. **Mentor Relationships:** (Track the impact of Faber's mentorship on Montag.)

Category 4 - Literary Craft and Style

Key Components of Style/Craft

- Diction: Specific word choices (formal vs. informal).
- Syntax: Sentence structure (short/fast vs. long/complex).
- Tone: The author's attitude (funny, serious, sarcastic).
- Imagery/Metaphor: Figurative language that creates vivid pictures.

REMEMBER: Note the phrase or sentence(s) and speaker, the p#, the observation

Literary Craft and Style In Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*:

1. **Imagery & Metaphors**: (Pay attention to vivid, often disturbing, imagery that emphasizes the dystopian setting.)
2. **Allusions**: (Identify literary references—e.g., to Shakespeare, the Bible, or poetry like "Dover Beach"—that Montag or Beatty cite.)
3. **Stream of Consciousness**: (Notice when the text mimics a chaotic or half-asleep mental state.)

II. Comprehension Questions: Answer each question in one to two complete sentences.

Part 1: The Hearth and the Salamander

1. **How does meeting Clarisse affect Montag?**
2. **What are the "electronic bees" and "seashells"?**
3. **Why does Mildred overdose?**
4. **What is the Mechanical Hound?**
5. **What lie does Captain Beatty tell Montag?**

Part 2: The Sieve and the Sand

1. **Why does Montag go to see Faber?**
2. **What does Faber say is missing from society?**
3. **How does Montag turn against his wife and her friends?**

Part 3: Burning Bright

1. **Who turned in the final alarm on Montag?**
2. **Why does Montag burn Beatty?**
3. **What is the importance of Granger's group?**
4. **How is the phoenix related to the story?**