

Relevancy Of Fahrenheit 451 To The Contemporary World

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The modern obsession with digital sensations, such as Wikipedia, Twitter, Facebook, etc., is overloaded with information and knowledge without any ability or time limit to access or process them (Bahrani, 2018). However, on the other hand, social media also proves to be a Fahrenheit in our lives as it censors the information that is required for the resource-consuming process by the brain. Contrary to social media platforms, books are enriched with knowledge and information about the entire world as they are not only transcribed symbols into words, but an ardent reader can also cooperate with the author, the context of why he/she has written a certain novel or short story, and also his/her background that can be seen incorporated in that writing. However, modern life is exhausted to the extent that people do not feel much sense in reading books; instead, they rely on digital sensations to set their brains on power-saving mode and skip the thinking process. Burning books and switching to social media platforms “not long after Nazis burned books, and eventually, human beings..... which brought political repression, blacklists, and censorship of literature and art” (Bahrani, 2018) for obtaining knowledge has made the world an exaggerated or idealized image but has also contributed to controlling people’s thoughts and emotions through censorship. This essay explores how *Fahrenheit 451* remains relevant to contemporary readers by serving as a window into Bradbury’s fictional world and teaching important lessons about our own reality.

An ingenious written work is one whose message holds true for the readers of any era and always stands the test of time. Ray Bradbury’s *Fahrenheit 451* is the prime example that was written around 65 years ago and is still relevant in contemporary society by serving as a window into both modern and Bradbury’s fictional world. One of the influential problems the novel talks about is the idea of censorship to control people’s lives in an imagined society, which is also relevant to today’s world due to the incorporation of technology into every arena of life. I have selected the theme of censorship to debunk how *Fahrenheit 451* acts as a window to see through the contemporary world as well as Bradbury’s imagined dystopian society. To begin with, the novel is set in a dystopian future where people live with a false sense of identity and security, and they are no longer able to think of anything, just like us living in the 21st century, because they are not allowed to read and keep books (Shenoy, 2016). They have had no sense of intellectual thought, freedom, and individuality as books were burned, and they had no source of knowledge and critical thinking left as Montag mentions, “It was a pleasure to burn. It was a special pleasure to see things eaten, to see things blackened and changed” (Bradbury, 1992) which acts as the reflection of today’s society as no books are harmed but yet harmed through the inventions of technology. Book burning is pathetically happening in today’s modern society, where technology is dominated and libraries are closed down (Bahrani, 2018). Thus, as Bradbury predicted, modern people have no thoughts of their own because the habit of book reading and face-to-face interaction is replaced with their mindless addiction to digital sensations

through electronic gadgets as technology has become an influential part of modern men's lives. Still, the people with intellect and critical nature left in Montag's society could enquire about the importance of questioning and bothering about something strange in the society: "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?" (Bradbury, 1992) to reflect as a window into our world as there are only very few people left who critique the discriminatory patterns of society yet called rebels by the government. Ray Bradbury, in this regard, uses the theme of mass media to highlight the issue of censorship in his dystopian novel. He captures a futuristic society in which people had no access to books as "the books, they feel, confuse citizens with contradictory values and ambivalent portrayals of human behaviour" (Mancini, 2011). The same problem today's world faces as governments ban certain books because political authorities consider some topics controversial for the common masses to read. Technology has consumed the whole of contemporary society, and we are also facing this issue today because we are far away from books and are so absorbed in gadgets.

The idea of censorship that Bradbury has presented throughout his novel also seems relevant to what Hitler did on the battlefield of WW II to control the German people's thoughts. The relevance of Hitler's censorship strategy to Bradbury's novel and contemporary society is that in today's world, people are also controlled by what they can see on their televisions, and often, they are presented with one side of the coin only. During World War II, Hitler also used the strategy of censorship and indoctrination as a parlous and offensive method to indoctrinate the youth in order to take control of their freedom of thought. He acquired the indoctrination ability of the youth by targeting ten to seven years old children in the classroom environment to develop devotion to Nazi beliefs and Hitler in them in order to build an army of youth. Hitler, to pursue and achieve his goal of indoctrination of youth, ordered German educators to implement "new textbooks that taught students to have immense love for Hitler and Nazi beliefs, obedience to militarism, anti-semitism, state authority, and racism" (Davis, 2012) to enforce Hitler's motives of censorship upon the German youth. The main aim of the syllabus of those textbooks and sportsmanship on the ground was to prepare a faithful Nazi army as the novel also relates to the Nazi's strategy "With school turning out more runners, jumpers, racers, tinkers, grabbers, snatchers, fliers, and swimmers instead of examiners, critics, knowers, and imaginative creators, the word 'intellectual,' of course, became the swear word it deserved to be" (Bradbury, 1992) by shaping the actions and thinking of the genius children through censoring what was right. The youth as ability to think and question was taken away from them through the use of indoctrination of the censored content accepted Nazi beliefs without even questioning the validity of the Nazi's enforced content. This article "Indoctrinating Youth" effectively sheds light on the purpose of enforcing "censored books" to achieve nefarious political designs and burning the "forbidden" ones, which could instigate people's critical thinking and questioning skills, particularly in the youth for sure (Davis, 2012).

In the novel, Bradbury allegorically conceptualizes a utopian society based on the idea of censorship where it is illegal to have books at home, and the government has passed legislation to burn down the houses that have books in them to ash. In today's world, we also see this happening although the government has not banned "all" books but made us so absorbed in the gadgets as "*Fahrenheit 451*

is... about the role of mindless technology and television on society; the new opiate of the masses” (Shenoy, 2016) that we cannot find time to read a good book but waste hours of the day over our smartphone. In the novel, anything controversial, such as books, schools, universities, and libraries, has been suppressed and banned from the people, and books are replaced with technology. Montag, who has been assigned the task of burning books, seems curious and horrified about what lies in these “forbidden books” that are illegal to read. When Clarisse asks him the question, “Do you ever read any of the books you burn?” he replies “, That’s against the law” (Bradbury, 1992), which shows that censorship prevails to a great extent in the society depicted in the novel. The idea of censorship is highly instilled in people’s minds that book reading is illegal; therefore, books are to be burned or banned, and they are okay with that “imposed censorship.” Montag’s wife is so indulged in technology that she cannot realize what happens in reality around her, just like a modern man who does not stop to look around at what is happening around her. Montag is also so absorbed in the idea that the government has rightfully banned the books and wonders why anyone would risk her life for some transcribed symbols into words on pieces of paper that are sewn together with a thread. A woman’s decision to die rather than part from her books marvels Montag that what makes her do that “The woman on the porch reached out with contempt for them all, and struck the kitchen match against the railing” (Bradbury, 1992) which clearly states that she does not want to give up on her cherished books.

The major issue that the novel highlights is the negligence of literature, which is shown by banning or burning books to emphasize censoring, which is the most effective concern for today’s readers to reconsider. Bradbury, through the theme of censorship in his so-called utopian society, warns future readers to take strict actions as “he was a courageous voice of reason, defending the right to free speech and free thought against the depredations” (Patai, 2012) if they do not want to make their society like Montag’s. The situations Montag’s society has faced are similar to the prominent issues of contemporary society, such as propaganda through mass media and censorship through banning books. Faber offers his perspective to Montag: “So now do you see why books are hated and feared? They show the pores in the face of life” (Bradbury, 1992) and promote digital platforms through technology and negligence of religious literature. The education system, due to censoring the informative content, heavily impacted Montag’s society. When Montag questions Captain Beatty about the education system, he answers in his gloomy voice, “School is shortened, discipline relaxed, histories, philosophies, languages dropped, English and spelling gradually neglected, finally almost completely ignored” (Bradbury, 1992). Furthermore, Bradbury also explores the idea of people being not curious and inquisitive about the phenomenon as the education system does not support students to question their surroundings as Clarisse mentions, “but do you know, they never ask questions, or at least most don’t; they just run the answers at you” (Bradbury, 1992). The same happens in modern society as people do not find enough time to read books that help an individual critique the realities of life. Rather, they rely on “breaking news” social media platforms present to them in a more unrealistic way to censor commoners’ thinking process. It is because if people start thinking, they would rebel against the government laws and would be able to talk about their rights. As the author mentions, “If you don’t want a house built, hide the nails and wood. If you don’t want a man unhappy politically,

don't give him two sides to a question to worry him; give him one. Better yet, give him none" (Bradbury, 1992) to culminate the extent government has suppressed individuals' thoughts. Therefore, the government has censored the content "The Fireman to locate and destroy all literature, burning books indiscriminately to stamp out unorthodox thinking" (Nasson, 2021) that could instigate creative thinking skills within people. Bradbury, in this regard, exaggerates the cultural norm of censorship in that so-called utopian society to express his fears for the futuristic contemporary society that people's desire for instant gratification could lead humanity to disaster.

In conclusion, the contemporary world is frighteningly similar to what Bradbury has represented in his imagined dystopian society, as the world we live in is saturated with modern digital inventions but not books, which have created social alienation in our society. Moreover, like the wrecked futuristic society, Bradbury envisions where information is censored by the government for promoting the anti-intellectual movement in a secretive manner, and people are forced to think in a certain way so that they could be prepared for certain motives as Hitler did in the World War II. In a nutshell, the theme of censorship in Bradbury's novel is used as a window into the contemporary world as well as into Bradbury's fictional world to teach us important lessons about our own reality, as censorship is always purposefully used to highlight the culture of intellectual complacency in order to show that people are only obsessed with political correctness.

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