The Importance Of Knowledge In Ray Bradbury's Fahrenheit 451

Posted on July 28, 2022

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Introduction

Knowledge plays a critical role in the development of any society. This importance has been effectively highlighted in the book "Fahrenheit 451" by Ray Bradbury, published in the 1950s, in which the author explains the growing aspect of the totalitarian society by utilizing the theme of knowledge. Fahrenheit 451 describes the temperature of the fire ignited by burning the books, which the author has symbolized as the source of knowledge necessary for the development and effectiveness of society. The primary focus of the author was to highlight the negative aspects of the technological advancements which took place in the overall oppressive political structure of 1940-1950 (Emrah). In this regard, the following paper effectively discusses the importance of knowledge in the novel and its implications in today's modern society.

The novel provides a critical discussion about the role of a brutal society in the destruction of knowledge when the whole society is involved in burning books without considering their importance. The story revolves around the main character, Guy Montag, who is a fireman and is strongly involved in this destruction process. By providing an excellent description of the dystopian society, Ray Bradbury has emphasized that modern society forgets the difference between knowledge and ignorance when individuals abandon books and utilize different technological tools to access knowledge, and do not even comprehend their intellectual loss while destroying the books (Smolla and Bradbury). The author further describes two different types of knowledge: destructive and constructive. The destructive form of knowledge emerges when individuals are subjected to censorship and technological control. This dimension of knowledge will also be discussed in the essay while highlighting the importance of knowledge as an essential part of a person's life.

Importance Of Knowledge

The main theme presented in the novel is the differentiation between knowledge and ignorance that, by any definition, are contradictory to each other. For example, one of the characters in the novel, Millie, portrays her ignorance by listening to the Seashell radio every night and taking an overdose of pills to forget the whole ordeal. She also watches TV and finds those programs very interesting, but they do not have an element of creativity to influence their audience positively. In this way, the

government was able to control society by restricting their access to constructive knowledge and information. A very similar depiction of the dystopian society is present in the short story “The Pedestrian” where the author has pictured an individual who unlike all other persons in the community tries to walk on the streets when TVs were used to mesmerize people in their homes. In Bradbury’s words, “…faces appear, and an entire street is startled by the passing of a lone figure, himself, in the early November evening” (Bradbury, Bradbury Stories: 100 of His Most Celebrated Tales). His knowledge of walking finally became the reason for his arrest as he did not adapt to modern life, and therefore, he was admitted to the “Psychiatric Center for Research on Regressive Tendencies”.

It highlights the precise manipulation and constant monitoring as the fundamental source of ignorance in society as individuals begin to adopt misinformation when they are forcefully subjected to certain kinds of information for years using administrative power. This ignorance cannot be eliminated unless people acquire authentic information. It makes it imperative to access constructive knowledge from an environment free of oppression to sustain productivity and creativity. It is evident from the novel where the author describes how people were unable to make mistakes and errors in society, which is the fundamental source of development and exploration, but characters in the book did not have diverse encounters to grasp the versatile information. Therefore, when Montag encountered Clarisse, it opened his heart, vision, and perception to develop a constructive approach towards understanding human behaviour and knowledge. Consequently, he begins to make an impact on society by delivering his knowledge to others. It finally leads him to join the intelligent people and become different from the vast majority of ignorant people in society.

In this way, the character of Guy Montag helps us to comprehend the significance of true knowledge and its difference from ignorance to determine the paradigm of our growth and development. Only this true form of knowledge can equip people with the necessary background and mindset to critically review the different concepts and ideas prevailing in society. This knowledge is further improved when people have diverse opportunities to apply their information in various situations and learn from their experiences. Therefore, when Guy Montag critically understood the dominant standards in society and found them destructive to the intellectual development of society, he detached himself from burning the books and finally decided to revitalize the knowledge by utilizing his approach of self-discovery.

An important aspect that the author has highlighted to describe the importance of knowledge is that books are the most critical factor for knowledge, wisdom, and the paradigm of intellectualism. When individuals in society are inclined to different technological tools, they reject the constructive knowledge that can be attained from books. It finally limits their ability to differentiate between constructive and destructive forms of knowledge and live a happy and prosperous life. As described by Vonnegut in his book “Harrison Bergeron” “Technological tools such as TV have immense power to sedate, rule, and terrorize society as George and Hazel, two main characters of the novel, are constantly distracted from the information being presented on the screen to develop a strong conscience of their presence and the surrounding environment” (Vonnegut). Therefore, in the

dystopian society of the novel, people are unable to comprehend the benefits of books, making them completely irrelevant. To highlight this, the author wrote, “Books aren’t people. You read, and I look all around, but there isn’t anybody…” (Bradbury 73).

However, as quoted by Bradbury, “…our path is simpler; we think better. All we want to do is keep the knowledge we believe that we will require”, knowledge is an integral component of the society because it always endeavors to maintain even the little that it possesses (Bradbury 152). However, if the purpose and direction of society are ruined, its ability to preserve knowledge is diminished, which ultimately leads to ignorance.

Conclusion

The novel Fahrenheit 451 remarkably describes the importance of knowledge in constructing a productive society where individuals can live a very happy and prosperous life. However, as highlighted by the author, this knowledge can only be obtained through books that were banned by the government in the dystopian society of the novel, which led to ignorance and euphoria. These aspects of ignorance and intellectual degradation of society without books can be observed in today’s world when people like Millie in the novel are more inclined to social media and other technological mediums and are unable to develop intellectual insights. This supports Bradbury’s arguments about the adverse effects of innovation and technological advancements, where people are now deprived of even basic knowledge. Thus, it becomes significantly important to acquire knowledge through reading and make effective decisions in our lives, for which books are the most influential medium.

Works Cited

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