

Burning Books: Background on *Fahrenheit 451*

1. Question & Research Task

Published in 1953, Ray Bradbury's dystopian novel *Fahrenheit 451* describes a world where books are banned and the government fears independent thought.

To better understand the character motivations and themes present in the novel, you will need to recreate the world Bradbury was living in and the history he was influenced by.

This novel was published the year the Korean War ended. The atrocities of WWII were fresh in the minds of Bradbury and his contemporaries. The Cold War was a new kind of war that fed on the fears of the Atomic Age and the perceived threats of communism. Meanwhile, new technologies and social changes brought about new thinking.

Your job will be to bring modern readers into the 1950s by composing an article for your assigned beat that will be shared with your classmates in the class newspaper, *World on Fire*.

In this Slam Dunk, you will conduct brief, focused research to respond to the inquiry question:

How does *Fahrenheit 451* reflect the time in which it was written?

SLIDE NAVIGATION

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Select the image above to view a short introduction and explanation of why we should read *Fahrenheit 451*.*

*YouTube video to be screened by teacher/librarian.

Image Source: [TED.Ed](#)

2. Information Sources

Choose several of the information sources linked here to complete the Student Activity on Slide 3.

1950s Politics	McCarthyism	1950s Technology	1950s Society	Cold War	Book Banning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Fahrenheit 451: Reading the 1950s” • “The 1950s” • “Historical Context: Fahrenheit 451” • “Korean War” • “Cold War” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “McCarthyism” (Gale Encyclopedia) • “Anticommunist Hysteria” • “House Un-American Activities Committee” • “McCarthyism” (St. James) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Ray Bradbury: 10 of his most prescient predictions” • “A World Always Talking: Did Fahrenheit 451 Predict the Future?” • “Historical Context: Fahrenheit 451” • “Fahrenheit 451” • “Ray Bradbury's Dystopia Fahrenheit 451, 50 Years Later” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Fahrenheit 451: Reading the 1950s” • “The 1950s” • “The Korean War” • “Fahrenheit 451” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Cold War” (UXL) • “The Cold War” (Gale Encyclopedia) • “Nuclear Age” • “Cold War” (Student Resources in Context) • “Fahrenheit 451” (Novels for Students) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Bannings and Burnings in History” • “Historical Context: Fahrenheit 451” • “The Freedom to Read” • “Banned!” • “All Fired Up”

3. Student Activity

As journalists, it is important to evaluate and corroborate sources before writing and sharing stories with the public.

Using the information sources on [Slide 2](#) or others you locate in BCPS Digital Content, you will need to take notes on your assigned topic. You will be gathering information that will be used to write a [news story](#). You may choose to record your notes using [NoodleTools](#) note cards, OneNote, or another method suggested by your teacher.

“The function of journalism is, primarily, to uncover vital new information in the public interest and to put that information in a context so that we can use it to improve the human condition.”

-[Joshua Oppenheimer](#)



Image Source: Pixabay

4. Assessment Activity

How does *Fahrenheit 451* reflect the time in which it was written?

1. Use this [guide to writing a news article](#) or other resources provided by your teacher to help you compose a news article for the paper *World on Fire*.

As you are preparing your article, be sure to cite your sources and use copyright-friendly images ([pics4learning](#), [Wikimedia Commons](#), [Google advanced search](#), [creative commons search](#), etc.).

2. You and a partner should review your article using the [self/peer review](#). Use the feedback to make needed revisions.

3. Upload your revised article to the *World on Fire* newspaper (Schoology Media Album, OneNote, or other location established by your teacher).

4. Once your class newspaper is finished, read the presented articles and take notes on the 5Ws and H for each article. You will use this to make connections as you read.

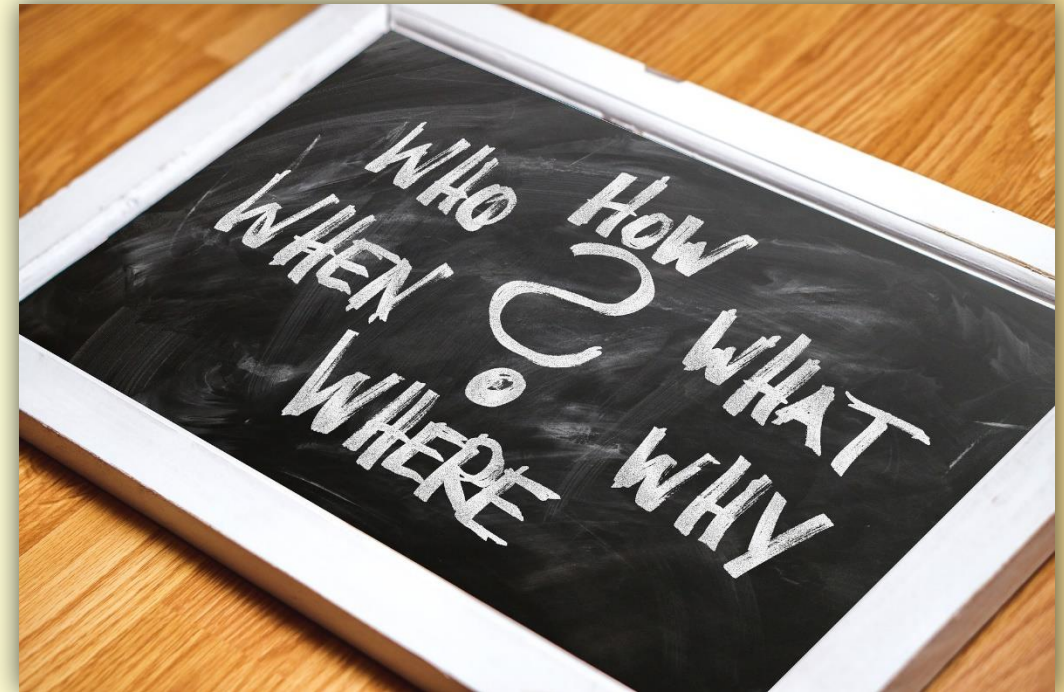


Image Source: [Pixabay](#)

Get ready to read!

What predictions can you make about *Fahrenheit 451* based on your new learning? Record your response in a reading journal or other format suggested by your teacher.

5. Enrichment Activities



Click on the image to view the 1943 Japanese Internment propaganda video
Image Source: [C-Span](#)



Click on the image to view a satiric video on US immigration policy
Image Source: [New York Times](#)

The world of *Fahrenheit 451* uses propaganda to drive fear of knowledge, one another, and free thought in this society. During the Cold War, propaganda was also used to instill fear and to justify government actions.

1. Review the types of [propaganda](#). Then, as you watch the videos linked to the images on the left, complete a Venn diagram comparing and contrasting the techniques used in each video.
2. Using a T-chart, compare the messages, techniques, and themes presented in each video.
3. Using your notes and evidence from the videos, compose a well-developed paragraph responding to the following statement. Be prepared to present your position.

Propaganda is/is not a necessary tool used by effective governments.

6. Teacher Resources

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Learning Standards Alignment

Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.9

Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.2

Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

AASL Standards Framework for Learners

Think: Learners identify collaborative opportunities by:

3.A.2 Developing new understandings through engagement in a learning group.

Create: Learners engage with new knowledge by following a process that includes:

I.B.1 Using evidence to investigate questions.

I.B.3 Generating products that illustrate learning.

Share: Learners responsibly, ethically, and legally share new information with a global community:

I.C.2. Disseminating new knowledge through means appropriate for the intended audience.

Grow: Learners participate in an ongoing inquiry-based process by:

I.D.2 Engaging in sustained inquiry.

English 9: Unit 2

Objective: Students will synthesize information from multiple sources on background information about *Fahrenheit 451* in order to explain how the novel reflects the history, behavior, and social issues of the time and setting

Time Frame: 1-2 class periods

Differentiation strategies for this lesson:

- Have students use learning supports provided in [BCPS Digital Content](#) found in the [Apps Portal](#). Refer to [Digital Content Snapshot/Support pages](#) as needed.

Notes to the teacher:V

- Collaborate with your school library media specialist to plan and implement this lesson.
- Print out or upload linked documents in advance
- Provide students with login information as needed to authenticate BCPS Digital Content. Login information is on the [BCPS Digital Content](#) page in the [Apps Portal](#)
- Consider assigning organizers to students as a OneDrive Assignment using the [Schoology Assignment App](#).
- Review citations and [guidelines for ethical use of images](#)
- For the YouTube video linked on Slide 1, the teacher/librarian may screen videos for the class or can provide student access via VoiceThread. See: [VoiceThread and YouTube](#)