

English 9 – Introduction to Genres – Mr. Stephens  
Summer Reading  
Guiding questions – *Fahrenheit 451*

All incoming freshmen are required to read two books during the summer, a novel and a work of non-fiction, and to complete written work, which will be graded, in preparation for the start of the course. Address these guiding questions as you read, before the beginning of school in August. There are no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ answers, but written responses should show that you have read the work closely and thoughtfully. You will take a reading comprehension test and write about this novel during the first semester. Typed responses are **strongly** recommended. You **may** hand-write your answers, but be prepared to transfer your writing to an electronic document for submission to Turnitin.com in August.

As Neil Gaiman writes in his introduction to the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition of *Fahrenheit 451*, “This book is a warning. It is a reminder that what we have is valuable, and that sometimes we take what we value for granted.” He continues writing about the three phrases “that make possible the world of writing about the world of not-yet...and they are simple phrases: *what if...? If only... If this goes on...*”

“‘*What if...?*’ gives us change, a departure from our lives. (*What if aliens landed tomorrow and gave us everything we wanted, but at a price?*)

“‘*If only...*’ lets us explore the glories and dangers of tomorrow. (*If only dogs could talk. If only I were invisible.*)

“‘*If this goes on...?*’ is the most predictive of the three, although it doesn’t try to predict an actual future with all its messy confusion. Instead, ‘If this goes on...’ fiction takes an element of life today, something clear and obvious and normally something troubling, and asks what would happen if that thing, that one thing, became bigger, became all-pervasive, changed the way we thought and behaved.”

As you read this novel, first keep notes on all the action that happens in the novel. Then think about what Ray Bradbury takes from the world that we live in today, and...

1. Describe what he must have seen 60 years ago that made him feel that such a cautionary tale was necessary.
2. In his speculation, Bradbury writes of what could happen if what he saw became bigger, all-pervasive, changing the way we think and behave. Now, respond, in a substantial paragraph considering how close he has come in his speculation of 1951 to the world that we live in today.
3. As you read, find a scene which you think illustrates each of the following characters best. Under each character’s name, reference the scene, and write a short synopsis (30-50 words) for each character.
  - a. Mildred
  - b. Faber
  - c. Beatty
  - d. Montag
  - e. Clarisse
4. Authors often work with the principle that we want good things to happen to good people, and we want bad things to happen to bad people. Is Guy Montag a good person? As you consider this question, remember what he does through the course of the novel. In a paragraph of 100-150 words, support your answer with details from the novel, using page numbers.
5. In this cautionary tale, do you walk away with a new perspective? As you close the novel, write a reflection of at least three substantial paragraphs (300-350 words) discussing what you thought about as you finished the novel.