



Summer Reading Questions
English 9 – Introduction to Literary Genres
Mr. Schantz and Mr. Stephens

All incoming freshmen are required to read two books during the summer, one a novel and the other a non-fiction adventure story, 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 gobbet test and write your first essay on this novel during the first two weeks of the term. You may use your notes and responses on that test.

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.

Fahrenheit 451

As Neil Gaiman writes in his introduction to the 60th 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...?** – This 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...** – This lets us explore the glories and dangers of tomorrow. (If only dogs could talk. If only I were invisible.)
- **If this goes on...** – This 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 are reading 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 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 paragraph of 50 to 150 words, 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 25- 50-word synopsis of the sort of person this character is.
 - 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 Montag a good person? As you consider this question, remember what he does through the course of the novel. In a paragraph of 50-150 words, support your answer with detail from the novel.
5. In this cautionary tale, do you walk away with a new perspective? As you close the novel, write in a paragraph of 50-150 words what you thought about as you finished Montag's story.

Endurance

1. The book opens with "The order to abandon ship was given at 5 P.M." We have to wait for some critical information. What is the effect of the writer starting the story in the middle, rather than with a 'normal' beginning? What missing information do you want to know as you read the first chapter?
2. In chapter 2, the narrator tells us something about Ernest Shackleton's character, concluding with a statement from one of Shackleton's men: "he was the greatest leader that ever came on God's earth, bar none." As you read through the book, track things Shackleton says and does that support this description. Use quotations (with page numbers) to support your ideas.
3. Do an internet search to bolster your understanding of the story's setting. Though the book has maps, you will want to use Google Earth or a similar tool to get a better sense of places like the Weddell Sea, the Larsen Ice Shelf, the South Shetland Islands, the Drake Passage, and others as they come up. Write down your impressions of these places.
4. As you read, you will undoubtedly encounter new (or new-ish) vocabulary words, such as 'brogue,' on page 8 (of the Basic Books paperback edition), or 'audacious' in Chapter 2. Start a collection of new words. Write them down, along with your best guess at the



meaning based on the context. Then look up their definitions and write those down. By the book's end, you should have at least 25 new words.

5. "Because it's there" is the famous reason one adventurer gave for risking his life to reach an unknown point. Do you think this is a reasonable response? Why do you think humans are so driven to push the boundaries of our knowledge of the world?
6. After you have finished the book, write a reflection in which you discuss these ideas, giving as much supporting detail as possible:
 - a. What makes a leader great? Who has helped you through a dangerous experience?
 - b. How would you have held up under the conditions Shackleton and his men faced?
 - c. Which hardship do you think would have been the least bearable for you?
 - d. What is the hardest adventure you have ever experienced? Describe it in detail.