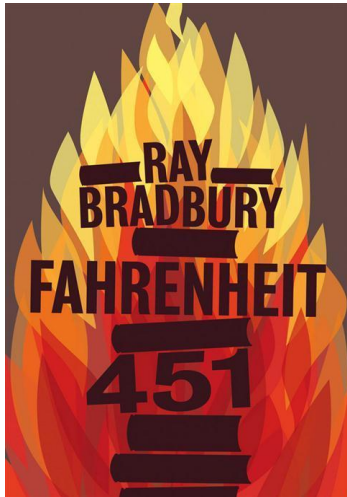


BOOK GROUP 2

APRIL 2024

FAHRENHEIT 451 RAY BRADBURY



This is a classic dystopian novel written by Ray Bradbury and published in 1953. It presents a disturbing possible future American society where books are outlawed and “firemen” burn any books that are found, as books are said to cause unhappiness and inequality. The houses of the book owners are also burnt to the ground. TV is the opiate of the masses. Streets are empty because the houses have “wall to wall” TVs that constantly churn out “happiness stories” which have no meaning. There is no need to go outside. The story is based around Guy Montag, a fireman who begins to question the policy after a chance meeting with a young girl, Clarissa who talks of a different world in which books are an important

component.

This questioning leads him to someone who gives him books and he begins to discover a different perspective on the life he is leading and the job he is doing. He is subsequently betrayed and becomes a fugitive finally finding refuge with a group of men who have memorised different books to keep the knowledge alive but who are outside society and constantly under threat of discovery.

Many of our members remember reading this book in their teens along with Orwell’s “1984” and “Animal Farm” and Huxley’s “Brave New World”. More than 50 years on the story has much more relevance in understanding the way current life is working out, how dictatorships emerge and the obsession with screens and modern -day reality TV. Subsequent world history has shown that the violence, fear, disregard of human life and oppressive regimes shown in this novel are even more evident now. It highlights the fear held by those in power that knowledge gained through books (and subsequently conversations about them) will lead to independent thought and challenge their authority. Keep the masses happy with distractions and they are easy to rule.

Some comments from the group:

“Sexism - Clarissa - a precursor of the manic pixie dream girl whose only purpose is to give the male protagonist important life lessons and who is then promptly killed off. Millicent and her friends - representation of all that is vacuous in society. All intellectuals are men - Faber, group in forest, Captain Beatty. All the books quoted are from classic tomes written by men - no Brontes, Austen, Woolf, Elliot, etc. Snobbery - Books are worthy. Other media are not. Implication that the people who

prefer other media are also not as worthy. Presumably, Bradbury was uncomfortable with the expansion of TV in the 50s.”

“The only part of the book I found interesting was the Afterword section which told how he came to write the book especially his encounter with the policeman when he was on a walk. (This surely could only happen in America) - It almost made the book worth reading! “

“This novel acknowledges how important books are to ordinary people. The author accurately predicts the influence that technology and the media will have over us”

“I’m still not sure how we should regard the book – a flight of fancy or a philosophical warning”

“This story has an interesting concept, especially being read in this day and age when “fake news” and “subtle propaganda” invade and control so much of our lives”

Christine Wright