

# 2

## Lesson Two

### FOCUS: Arts and Culture

*Fahrenheit 451* was published in 1953, the year the Korean War ended. The memory of Hitler's atrocities and World War II was less than a decade old. The Cold War, meanwhile, had hardened into a standoff. In 1952 the U.S. tested a hydrogen bomb, and the U.S.S.R. followed suit a year later. Only three years later, Frenchman Jean-Paul Sartre's philosophy of existentialism, *Being and Nothingness*, is published in an English translation.

In jazz, the swing era gave way to bebop, bringing new musical expression to the post-war era. In New York, saxophonist Charlie Parker and trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie inspired audiences with their dynamic virtuosity. A year after the publication of *Fahrenheit 451*, the Voice of America began broadcasting jazz worldwide. In 1956, the U.S. State Department sent Duke Ellington, Dizzy Gillespie, and Louis Armstrong on tour in the hope that their performances would spread American democracy and alleviate the tensions of the Cold War.

### Discussion Activities

Listen to the Big Read CD, Track Two (12 minutes). After listening to the first two tracks of the CD, your students should be able to identify several aspects of the novel that link to trends in politics, music, literature, and technology. Discuss NEA Jazz Master Paquito D'Rivera's comments that relate his youth in Cuba to the themes of the novel.

Go to NEA's Jazz in the Schools Web site at [www.neajazzintheschools.org](http://www.neajazzintheschools.org). Go to Lesson Three and play clips of Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Miles Davis, and Dave Brubeck. Ask students to take notes as they listen. See if they can identify patterns in the music. Team with your music specialist to further explore the music of the 1950s.

### Writing Exercise

Montag's television includes headphones called "seashells." The "wall to wall circuit" allows Mildred to enter the "play" and, therefore, the television programming. How does the technology within the novel compare to our current technology? In the first pages of the novel, does technology improve the quality of life for Montag and his wife, Mildred? Why or why not?

### Homework

Finish Part One (pp. 32-68). Ask students to consider why the narrator introduces us to Montag at this time of his life, when he encounters Clarisse and confronts Mildred's overdose.