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## Lesson Three

### FOCUS: Narrative and Point of View

First-person narration wraps the reader into the perspective of the main character, as this person tells us, first-hand, about her or his experiences. This voice uses the first-person “I” to recount her or his adventures and is almost always personally invested in how the drama unfolds.

Bradbury employs a third-person narrator in *Fahrenheit 451*. Third-person narration uses “he” or “she” to tell the story and establishes a greater distance between narrator and audience, as an outside observer relates events. Third-person narration may or may not be omniscient. An omniscient third-person narrator knows the thoughts and movements of every character.

*Fahrenheit 451* is not strictly omniscient; we know only Montag’s movements and thoughts. The narration follows Montag like a camera, and the reader is never allowed into the lives of other characters, except for what they say to him. This inevitably increases our sympathy for Montag.

### Discussion Activities

Reread Captain Beatty’s monologue (pp.57-59). Discuss his view that school cultivates anti-intellectual sentiment (p.58). Do students think it accurately depicts their school? Do books violate the idea that “everyone is made equal” (p.58)?

How might this story be narrated in the first-person from the point of view of a government official that believes burning books protects society? Have the class brainstorm the outline of a new version of *451* told from this perspective.

### Writing Exercise

Clarisse says that “People don’t talk about anything...nobody says anything different from anyone else...My uncle says it was different once” (p.31). Begin writing the novel in the third-person using Clarisse as the central character.

Write a letter to Captain Beatty responding to his ideas about education and his charge that “a book is a loaded gun” (p.58). Do you agree or disagree with his ideas? In your letter, explain your own ideas about education and the value of books.

### Homework

Read Part Two (pp. 69-91). Five significant characters have been introduced: Montag, Clarisse, Mildred, Beattie, and Faber. Have students make lists of what motivates each of these characters.