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Lesson Six

FOCUS: Symbols

Complex images do more than simply map the inner landscape; they become symbols. As a form of figurative language, symbols can maintain our fascination by hinting beyond the literal, drawing us into the story, or asking us to explore the author's intentions. The futuristic worlds of science-fiction genre utilize symbols to explore our current circumstances.

Bradbury repeats and expands certain images that become keys to unlocking the story. Front porches and rocking chairs symbolize the past, a time when people intermingled without the distraction of electronic screens. The Mechanical Hound, an especially important symbol, represents Montag's modern world and the deadly possibilities around every corner.

Discussion Activities

Bradbury writes, "The books leapt and danced like roasted birds, their wings ablaze with red and yellow feathers" (p. 117). Divide the class into groups that will examine 20 page segments of the book, starting at the beginning. Each group will present the symbols that appear in its section. Students should be especially attentive to the way Bradbury uses fire and books both literally and symbolically.

Writing Exercise

Reread the detailed description of the Hound (p.24) and the battle (p.120). Why might Montag's expression of affection to the Hound, mark a turning point in his development? What role does affection play in this world? What might be the significance of Montag's final battle with the Hound? Finally, how might the Mechanical Hound be a symbol for Montag's world?

Have students free-write on a conflict in our world. They should explain the details of this conflict. Have students then develop a symbol to capture its complexity.

Homework

Read pp. 131-145. Ask students to think about what kind of transformation Montag has experienced and consider whether anyone else in the novel has undergone a similar journey.