

# 9

## Lesson Nine

### FOCUS: Themes of the Novel

Lesson One through Lesson Eight should assist the class in developing an interpretation of the novel. The development of characters, the implications of Bradbury's figurative language, and the unfolding plot contribute to the themes. The themes of a novel explore the meaning of human life. Themes are issues—love, war, freedom, and responsibility—that grab a reader's attention and do not let up.

As one reads *Fahrenheit 451*, certain themes stand out: the repression of free thought through censorship, a proper education that values books, the loss of culture and history, the threat of how new technology may deaden human experience, the constant demand to satisfy immediate visual and sensory appetites, the value of authentic human interaction, and the value of the natural world. For Bradbury, our choice to use, misuse, or discard books relates to all these themes.



### Discussion Activities and Writing Exercise



Use the following questions to stimulate discussion or provide writing exercises. Have students link Faber's comments on books (pp. 80-89) to other passages that reflect on the same theme. Explore the statements *Fahrenheit 451* makes about the following:

#### Happiness

"We have everything we need to be happy, but we aren't happy. Something's missing" (p.82). How might Bradbury be defining happiness in *Fahrenheit 451*? Does he present a new idea of happiness, or preserve an older idea?

#### Knowledge

"[Books] stitched the patches of the universe together into one garment for us." (p. 83) How do books draw together ideas and information so as to capture details that might otherwise be missed?

#### Freedom of Thought

"The television...tells you what to think and blasts it in" (p.84). Members of this world have "plenty off-hours" but do they have "time to think"? What kind of thinking do Faber and Bradbury prefer? Will it initially make life more difficult?

#### Education

"Remember, the firemen are rarely necessary. The public itself stopped reading of its own accord" (p. 87). What kind of education is necessary to create citizens who recognize "quality of information," take "leisure to digest it," and "carry out actions based on what we learn from the first two?" (p. 84) How might this relate to our current educational system?



### Homework

Students should begin working on their essays. See "Essay Topics" at the end of this guide. For additional questions, see the Reader's Guide "Discussion Questions." (pp. 14-15) Turn in outlines and/or rough drafts at the next class.