

Culminating Discussion: SYMBOLISM, MOTIF & THEME

Directions:

Answer each questions in several detailed sentences, making specific references to the text of the book. Please note that this list does not replace the earlier study guides; you should know the symbols, motifs and themes from those guides, too.

1. Motif: Conformity
 - a. Part 3, chapter 1, p.113. Explain Beatty's comments about Clarisse. Hint : why does he seem to hate her?
 - b. Explain how Beatty and Clarisse symbolize society and the rebellious individual in this book.
 - c. Write a theme statement about conformity, society, and the individual.
2. Motif: Knowledge
 - a. Part 3, chapter 10. "Perhaps he had expected their faces to burn and glitter with the knowledge they carried, to glow as lanterns glow, with the light in them" (154). Explain this quote.
 - b. Connect this passage to the title of Part 3, "Burning Bright."
 - c. Write a theme statement about knowledge, appearances and burning.
3. Motif: Societal flaws vs. Individual flaws
 - a. Part 3, chapter 11, p.155. Summarize and explain Granger's speech about his grandfather.
 - b. Connect this passage to Montag's concern that he is not upset about Millie's death. Explain how/why society is the problem and not Montag.
 - c. Write one theme statement about societal flaws and individual flaws, and one about family.
4. Symbol: Phoenix
 - a. Part 3, chapter 12. Explain the myth of the phoenix.
 - b. Explain how this myth connects to Montag and to the F451 society. Suggest more than one connection each, if possible.
 - c. Write one theme statement about the phoenix, death and rebirth.
5. Motif: Leadership
 - a. Part 3, chapter 12, p.164. Granger steps aside for Montag. Suggest possible reasons for this.
 - b. By considering his characteristics, explain whether Montag would be a good leader as the society tries to rebuild.
 - c. Write one theme statement about leadership.
6. Motif: Fate vs. Choice
 - a. Were the events of Montag's life inevitable once he rejected the rules of his society? Consider both sides.
 - b. Choose a side and explain why you support it more.
 - c. Write one theme statement about fate and choice.
7. Motif: Happiness
 - a. Clarisse asks Montag, "Are you happy?" Explain what she means.
 - b. Beatty calls the firemen, "The Happiness Boys." Explain what he means.
 - c. Write one theme statement about happiness vs. false happiness.
8. Motif: Rights and Freedoms
 - a. What are one's rights in the F451 world? Compare to our rights today, including but not limited to the First Amendment.
 - b. Explain how this loss of freedom happened in the novel and whether it could happen in real life.
 - c. Write one theme statement about rights and freedoms—and losing them.

9. Motif: Equality

- a. Thomas Jefferson wrote, “All men are created equal.” Beatty says that everyone must be “made equal.” Explain each person’s viewpoint.
- b. Explain which is more true, and also which is more possible to achieve.
- c. Write one theme statement about equality, tolerance, and opportunity.

10. Motif: History

- a. In the F451 world, most people have forgotten the past and, somehow, their government is involved. Explain why/how this has happened.
- b. Explain the disadvantages of living in a society that erases the past.
- c. Write one theme statement about history, ignorance, and learning.

11. Motif: Burning Books

- a. The F451 world has declared many books to be illegal, and burns them. What other groups have burned books?
- b. Discuss the idea that a little book burning isn’t really a problem. Could this be true? Why or why not?
- c. Write one theme statement about burning books.

12. Motif: Saving books

- a. Explain how some people in the F451 world have found a way to preserve books. Also explain how this might benefit the society as it tried to rebuild itself.
- b. No one is writing new books. Explain how this might affect the “new society.” What’s the worst case scenario?
- c. Write one theme statement about classics, new works and progress.

13. Motif: Division of the self

- a. Montag is frequently described as splitting into two people. Explain this.
- b. Consider the idea that Montag is actually becoming one whole person for the first time.
- c. Write one theme statement about confusion, growth, and internal conflict.

14. Authorial vision

- a. Bradbury said once, “No use going to class unless you go to the library.” What does he mean?
- b. Connect this idea both to the book and to your own life.
- c. Write one theme statement about education, reading and true learning.

15. Motif: Technology

- a. Explain how technology’s advances affected society, according to Beatty.
- b. Explain some examples of futuristic technology in the F451 world, and explain how these “improvements” have affected society. Consider the house, the snake, the hound, etc.
- c. Write one theme statement about technology, progress and unforeseen costs.

16—20. Connections

Discuss each of the following quotes by explaining its meaning and how/why it connects to the F451 world.

- a. “In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.”
Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.
- b. “Why has government been instituted at all? Because the passions of men will not conform to the dictates of reason and justice, without constraint.” Alexander Hamilton
- c. “You must be the change you wish to see in the world.” Mahatma Gandhi
- d. “Associate yourself with men of quality if you esteem your own reputation, for ‘tis better to be alone than in bad company.” George Washington
- e. “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.” Margaret Mead.