

Fahrenheit 451 Notes

Vocabulary

1. Apocalypse- an event involving destruction or damage on an awesome or catastrophic scale. In dystopian fiction, an apocalyptic event often either precedes the establishment of an authoritarian government, or ends it.
2. Bureaucracy- a system of government in which most of the important decisions are made by unelected officials rather than by elected representatives. Dystopian governments often feature massive faceless bureaucracies.
3. Conformity- behavior in accordance with socially accepted conventions or standards. Dystopian societies often demand complete conformity in order to maintain control over the individuals living in them.
4. Cult of Personality- a situation in which a public figure (such as a political leader) is deliberately presented to the people of a country as a great person who should be admired, loved, and obeyed, often without question.
5. Dehumanize- the process of depriving a person or group of positive human qualities. The dehumanization of people in a dystopia makes it easier to control and eliminate those who disagree with the ruling government.
6. Dissent- the expression or holding of opinions at variance with those previously, commonly, or officially held. In a dystopian world, dissent cannot be tolerated or it might lead to revolution; thus it is often punished with extreme measures, including torture and death.
7. Dystopia- an imagined state or society in which there is great suffering or injustice, typically one that is totalitarian or post-apocalyptic.
8. Ideology- a system of ideas and ideals, especially one which forms the basis of economic or political theory and policy.
9. Incriminate- make (someone) appear guilty of a crime or wrongdoing; strongly imply the guilt of (someone). In a dystopian world, dissenters are often incriminated and punished- either by the government, their fellow citizens, or even (in the case of extreme brainwashing) themselves
10. Oppression- prolonged cruel or unjust treatment or control. Oppression is a feature of the dystopian world, though it is not always readily apparent (sometimes it is hidden- but it is always there).
11. Propaganda- information, especially of a biased or misleading nature, used to promote or publicize a particular political cause or point of view. Dystopian governments often use propaganda to control their citizens and thought within the society.
12. Scapegoat- a person who is blamed for the wrongdoings, mistakes, or faults of others, especially for reasons of expediency. Authoritarian governments use scapegoats so they will not have to accept any of the blame for their failings and thus lose any of their power of their people.
13. Utopia- an imagined place or state of things in which everything is perfect. A dystopia is an inversion of utopia- a place where people have tried to perfect things and failed utterly, or even a place which *seems* perfect but has deep and systematic problems.

Themes

- Monopoly of thought by a controlling power
- Propaganda used to control citizens
- Figurehead is worshipped (cult of personality)
- Information is often restricted
- Surveillance of populace is constant
- Citizens fear the outside world
- The natural world is distrusted
- Conformity is celebrated while individualism is discouraged or even punished
- Society is an illusion of a Utopia
- There is an attempt to eradicate family/love (why???)
- Society is often divided into classes or castes
- Individuals are often powerless next to the state
- The action often occurs at night

Protagonist

- Feels trapped and struggles to escape
- Questions existing societal and political systems
- Believes something is terribly wrong with society
- Helps the audience recognize negative aspects of the dystopian world