

Arie Zuber (12th Grade: Broadview Heights, Ohio)
Level III Semifinalist
Letter to Ray Bradbury concerning his book, *Fahrenheit 451*

Dear Ray Bradbury:

Although many of my classmates failed to appreciate the insights covered in *Fahrenheit 451*, I found the book not only very interesting, but it both reflected and paralleled my life. I found the main character, Guy Montag, to be very relatable. His ability to question the status quo of his occupation (burning books) is not unlike my questioning of the conservative-esque political beliefs that I was brought up with. Guy witnessed a woman dying for her belief in the importance of books; this event changed him. This was very similar to the time in my life when I witnessed the Bush administration's decision to enter into the Iraq War. My conservative parents convinced my eight-year-old mind to support the decision at the time. As I grew older, I started to grow distanced from not only the way, but also from just blindly imitating the political beliefs of my parents. Like Guy Montag, I, too, was beginning to realize that just "going with the flow" was not sufficient enough to determine my outlook on life.

Guy steals a book to examine it with his wife in order to find out if there is any value within its content; similarly, I researched the internet, read various books regarding political philosophy, and interviewed my friends' parents about politics in order to find out if being a conservative was really a right fit for me. I had to explore the "unknown." What I discovered from all my research was that I actually believed in a strong central government, I supported welfare-based programs, and I supported protecting the environment. I supported political beliefs that were completely contrary to those of my parents. Like Guy Montag, I took some time (several years) to muster up the curiosity to examine both sides of the debate; but once I did, I realized where I truly belonged.

Guy and I both share the trait of being open-minded; we both are able to examine all sides of a controversial subject and decide where we stand. *Fahrenheit 451* taught me that no matter what the status quo might happen to be, I should not let the opinions of others deter me from making my own decisions. I also should be willing to change my lifestyle if it's in contradiction to my beliefs (such as when Montag stopped burning books).

During the reading of this book, I was surprised that a piece of literature could be so powerful in affirming my current beliefs. The parallels of Guy Montag with my own life cemented a newfound confidence in me. The character of Guy Montag seemed so real at the end of the book—almost like he was a friend or even a part of me. Whenever I hesitate to question a situation I have much doubt in, the thought of Guy Montag allows me to muster up the courage to examine the situation carefully to see if I really agree with it on a moral and philosophical level.

Sincerely,

Arie Zuber