

Happiness in Fahrenheit 451

Prose

How does society experience happiness?

- Through intense gratification, sensations (speed, violence)
 - Constant motion + fun + distraction = happiness
 - Happiness is sought through distraction, mindless entertainment
- The usage of artificial means to be happy
- In society, people are made happy by simplifying their lives
 - represents conformity and loss of personality
- *Q. They were like a monstrous crystal chandelier tinkling in a thousand chimes, he saw their Chesire Cat smiles burning through the walls of the house, and now they were screaming at each other above the din.* -> shows the grotesque and fake the happiness normal citizens experience.



How do people in F451 find happiness?

- Beatty: exercising his power over people
 - He embodies the regime, and thus finds joy in burning books
 - The more he can suppress the people and their views the happier he will be
 - *Q. Beatty smiled his smile which showed the candy pinkness of his gums* -> derives joy from manipulating and scaring Montag
- Clarisse: finds happiness through human nature
 - Talking, thinking, nature, making connections
 - *Q. She smiled when she saw Montag. "Hello!"* -> shows how she enjoys human interaction

- Derives happiness through interaction with people, which the government actively suppresses
- Mildred: through artificial means
 - Validation over shallow things + escapism + speeding
 - Unconsciously becomes the perfect victim of the government + becomes a tool of the government
 - portrayed as a media-obsessed woman who claims that she is happy
 - her happiness is derived from constant immersion in entertainment in mass media
- Montag: develops throughout the book
 - At the start: finds extreme joy in burning (*'he would feel the fiery smile still gripped by his face muscles'*)
 - At the end: freedom to think and act from the books (*when he thought to test it, was half a smile. -> done while he is on the run, symbolic of his happiness coming from his rebellions'*)
 - Realises how unhappy his life is ("Happy! Of all the nonsense... He felt his smile slide away... He was not happy. He was not happy. He said the words to himself. He recognized this as the true state of affairs. He wore his happiness like a mask...")
 - Montag is a character who goes through an arc of transformation moving from blind obedience to enlightenment and discovers that true happiness lies beyond the propaganda of the government
 - Meeting Clarisse (unlike anyone who knows) sparks his desire to find happiness (*Are you happy?*) and makes him doubt his contentment with life
 - Mildred's suicide attempt symbolizes an awakening and opens Montag's eyes to not only his own misery, but his wife's as well
- Faber: hope in humanity
 - Starts out as unhappy because of his inaction, causing him a lack of self esteem
 - Sees a world devoid of knowledge and wants a better society, dissatisfied with society



- Starts feeling joy once he sees Montag, who is his hope that society can improve from its censored state (*The old man laughed* when Montag wears his modified Seashell, *"I feel alive for the first time in years,"* when Montag comes back after burning Beatty)

Lines

- <https://phdessay.com/happiness-in-the-fahrenheit-451/>
 - Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury teaches readers that happiness is directly tied to genuinely knowing one's self.
 - Happiness being represented in this novel is being portrayed by hiding behind a fake mask to show that they are happy when they really are not.
 - Beatty explains that it isn't equality that causes people to be happy but rather that inequality that causes an imbalance.
 - To add on, Clarisse and Professor Faber are characters who discover how happiness is found in oneself. They find happiness through their own indulgences, curiosity and experiences. They are aware for who they are and direct tie to knowing themselves.
 - Given these points, happiness can be found based on human equality or through satisfaction of curiosity and experiences, but as an end result knowing what first really makes oneself, in order to have happiness.
- <https://www.sparknotes.com/lit/451/themes/>
 - Mildred insists that she's happy, yet her near-suicide at the beginning of the novel suggests otherwise.
 - Dissatisfaction rages just beneath the surface, even for those who don't consciously realize it.
 - However, Montag realizes early in the novel that constant entertainment has bred deep dissatisfaction.

