

***FAHRENHEIT 451* SOCRATIC SEMINAR**

The Socratic method of teaching is based on Socrates' theory that it is more important to enable students to think for themselves than to merely fill their heads with "right" answers. Therefore, he regularly engaged his pupils in dialogues by responding to their questions with questions, instead of answers. This process encourages divergent thinking (thinking for yourself) rather than convergent thinking (believing what everyone else tells you).

What Do I Do?

- Refer to the text when needed during the discussion. A seminar is not a test of memory. You are not "learning a subject"; your goal is to understand the ideas, issues, and values reflected in the text. However, **YOU MUST BACK UP YOUR OPINIONS WITH EVIDENCE!**
- Talk to each other rather than raising your hand. I will not be involved in the discussion.
- Stick to the point currently under discussion. Listen carefully and respectfully. Take turns speaking. A good conversation requires good conversation skills.
- If you get stuck, consider using one of the following:
 - "What do you mean by what you just said?"
 - "I don't think I agree with what you said about _____. Do you mean _____?"
 - "What evidence do you use to support the claim that _____?"
 - "I don't see the connection. How does _____ follow from _____?"

Inner Circle Rubric:

25 pts: Out of the ordinary insights and commentary

24 pts: Deep knowledge of the text and excellent participation in seminar

23 pts: Adequate understanding of text and/or limited participation in seminar

22 pts: Student speaks only briefly in seminar

20 pts: Student does not speak in seminar

-5 pts from grade for failure to pass in preparatory questions

INNER CIRCLE QUESTIONS (*Choose three.*)

1. Montag desperately wants to believe that books are the solution to the problems he sees all around him. Instead, thanks to the books he tries to save, he loses his wife, job, and home in the span of a day. Oh, and he kills a man. Does he actually gain anything from books? Do we, as readers, gain anything from them?
2. Although Ray Bradbury's work is often referred to as science fiction, *Fahrenheit 451* has plenty to say about the world as it actually is, and not just as it could be. In what ways is this world like ours? What does this tell us about the dangers facing our own society?
3. Montag and Faber agree that there are those who burn and those who build. Is there anything that can be done to fix this broken society besides starting totally new? Moreover, does this book give us any insight into how to better our own world?
4. What point is this book trying to make? Go beyond the obvious to try to tap into Bradbury's deepest insights about the nature of humanity and the nature of society—its failures, its potential, and its weaknesses. What is this book really about?

OUTER CIRCLE QUESTIONS

Answer the following. Note for each WHOSE idea/act you chose.

1. A idea you liked
2. An idea you disagreed with and why
3. An act of kindness you noticed, however small
4. An idea that hadn't occurred to you before your classmate said it