

# FAHRENHEIT 451 LESSON PLAN

## LESSON

### STUDYING THE WORLD OF FAHRENHEIT 451

**GOAL** To help students understand themes of censorship and suppression of truth in *Fahrenheit 451*.

**TIME REQUIRED** 45–60 minutes

**MATERIALS NEEDED** Segments of *Fahrenheit 451* at [hbo.com/classrooms](http://hbo.com/classrooms); student activity sheet

**CLASSROOM CAUTION** This lesson references an edited version of *Fahrenheit 451* that removes scenes of extreme violence, sexual content, and substance abuse. However, scenes remain that contain smoking, drinking, and acts of violence. Educators are advised to screen all content before showing it to students. Note that it is also possible to complete this lesson by only watching the recommended scenes in the activity sheet.

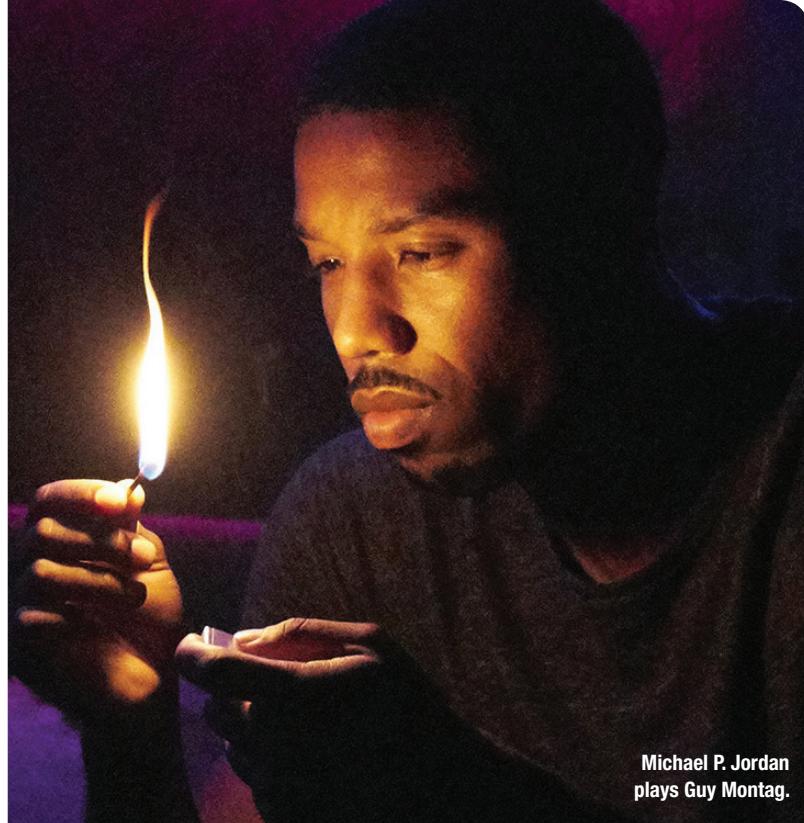
## INSTRUCTIONS

1. Introduce students to the novel *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury. In this work, the government believes that too much knowledge is a bad thing, leading to unrest and even civil war. That's why firemen in this dystopia (anti-utopia) burn books. The government also creates what today could be called "fake news"—changing historical and current facts to support its policies and maintain control.
2. In *Fahrenheit 451*, the Ministry teaches that certain truths from the past are lies and censors public information. **Censorship** is the prohibition of books, films, and other material deemed politically dangerous or a threat to society.
3. Distribute the student activity sheet. Review the meaning of **dystopian** and **protagonist**. Show the film (or selected scenes), noting the Classroom Caution above. After each scene, discuss responses to questions as a class. [Click here](#) for suggested answers to the discussion questions.



Sofia Boutella  
plays Clarisse  
McClellan.

4. After watching the scenes, encourage students to discuss the film's relevance to today's issue of fake news with the questions above right.



Michael P. Jordan  
plays Guy Montag.

► *What do you think of when you think of fake news?*

► *What tools do we have as a society to maintain the truth?* (You may want to refer to guidelines from reputable journalism or news literacy organizations, such as the News Literacy Project, for tips on how to identify misinformation).

► *Can you see our world becoming like Fahrenheit 451? Why or why not?*

## EXTENSIONS

**PAIRED READING** Have students compare and contrast the film with Ray Bradbury's original *Fahrenheit 451*.

**RESEARCH** Have students write a research paper on the history of book burnings and censorship.

**DEBATE** The Ministry believes that too much knowledge leads to unrest and even war. The rebel Eels believe that works of art and literature are vital to humanity. Divide the class into two groups and organize a debate to present arguments defending each side.

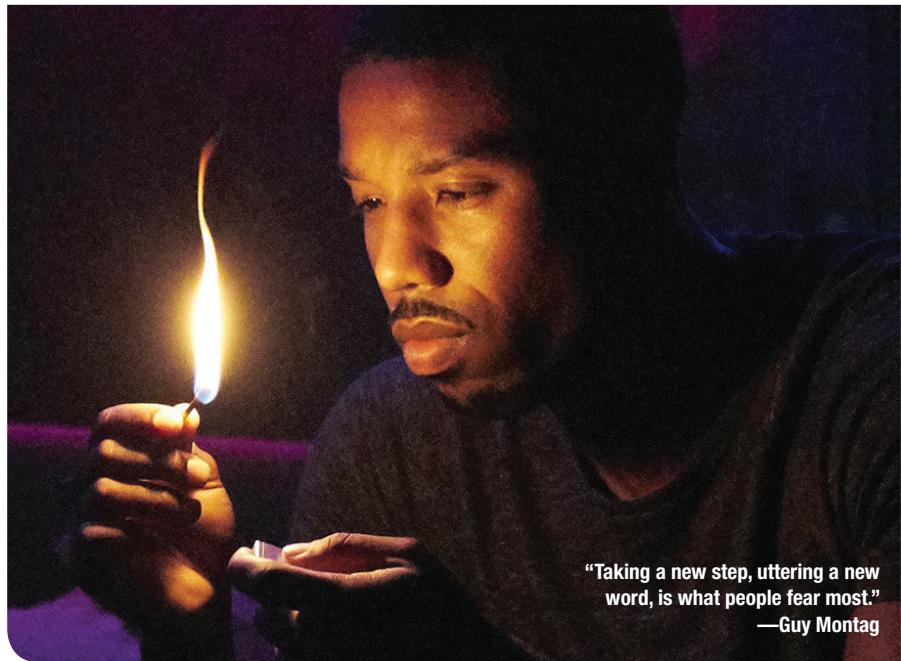
## STANDARDS

**CCSS.ELA-**  
**LITERACY** RL.9-10.1, RL.9-10.2, RL.9-10.7, RL.11-12.2, RL.11-12.3

# FAHRENHEIT 451 STUDENT ACTIVITY



View the clips below from *Fahrenheit 451*, where truth is suppressed and the job of firemen is to seek out and burn books. After viewing the segments, use the Discuss questions in small-group conversations.



"Taking a new step, uttering a new word, is what people fear most."  
—Guy Montag

## ESTABLISHING NEW NORMS

### ► 5:08–7:02

A group of young students are educated about what is right and wrong, and that books are a threat and must be burned.

#### DISCUSS

- What are the characteristics of this **dystopian** world as shown in this scene?
- What does the **protagonist** Guy Montag mean when he says "Stay vivid on The Nine. If you see something, say something"?

## CHANGING HISTORY

### ► 15:35–17:00

The two main characters, Captain Beatty and Montag—both firemen—confront rebels who are trying to preserve the truth.

#### DISCUSS

- What happens in this scene that shows there is no more in-depth news coverage?
- What historical fact about Ben Franklin has been changed?
- Why are the news, facts, and ideas dangerous to society, according to Beatty?



"A little knowledge is a dangerous thing."  
—Captain Beatty

## ERASING THOUGHT

### ► 47:58–48:52

Montag visits Clarisse's apartment to get a better understanding of truth.

#### DISCUSS

- Why has the Ministry been wiping away language, according to the lead female character, Clarisse McClellan?
- Why does the Ministry want one language, according to Montag?
- McClellan says that people are to blame for the way things are, that they demanded a world like this. What do you think she means?



"People demanded a world like this."  
—Clarisse McClellan