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<tr>
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<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Article</td>
<td>Reprinted Article</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conference Proceedings</td>
<td>U.S. Report or Document</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissertation or Thesis</td>
<td>U.S. Rule or Regulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>U.S. Rule or Regulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>U.S. Rule or Regulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electronic/Online</td>
<td>Unpublished</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Periodicals</td>
<td>Unpublished</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonperiodicals</td>
<td>Unpublished</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio, Video, Images</td>
<td>Unpublished</td>
</tr>
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<td>Unpublished</td>
</tr>
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Anthology/Collection

The Power of the Wilderness in Fahrenheit 451
Rafeeq O. McGiverson

Nature in Bradbury’s novel is not simply a metaphorical device that offers a pleasing contrast to Montag’s artificial life in the city, notes Rafeeq O. McGiverson. The natural world in Fahrenheit 451 is a wilderness that can be both attractive and awesome, even frightening. But facing that wilderness, McGiverson says, helps the hero understand his proper place in the world. McGiverson, who teaches at Lansing Community College in Michigan, has written on several aspects of Fahrenheit 451.

The importance of the wilderness in Ray Bradbury’s 1953 Fahrenheit 451 has been relatively ignored by critics, and when it has been discussed, this crucial subtheme has been distorted by oversimplification. Many have commented rather briefly upon Bradbury’s depiction of the wilderness, but few go beyond seeing, as John Huntington does, that “nature is good and technology is bad.” Certainly Bradbury shows nature to be preferable to the artificial sterility of the novel’s compulsively hedonistic urban consumer society, yet he also wisely suggests that to be truly human we must know our place in the natural world not only by appreciating the beauties of the wilderness but by respecting its awesome power as well. The thoughtful and moral characters of the novel draw strength from the wilderness, and, when appropriate, they also respect and even fear it. It is this common approach to the world that makes them humane and admirable.

Clarisse McClellan, the inquisitive seventeen year old who helps the dissatisfied “fireman” Guy Montag turn away from his profession of burning books, illustrates how an app...
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The Power of the Wilderness in *Fahrenheit 451*

Rafeeq O. McGiveron

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