



AP[®] English Literature 2002 Sample Student Responses Form B

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In Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*, the protagonist fireman Guy Montag has in fact two secrets to keep. At first, he must keep the secret of his own dissatisfaction with listless modern life from himself; then, once he admits to himself his inability to "enjoy" life as other citizens, he ~~must~~ must keep from society, from other people, the secret of the vicious edifice upon which their lives, collective and individual, are founded, ~~in turn~~ so as to prevent persecution and execution as a dissident and 'dangerous' intellectual-in-embryo. Thus, in an ironic paradox, the all-important truths of ~~the~~ America's and Montag's own misery must be kept secret so that the lies which sustain might continue undisturbed, until it becomes imperative that Americans be warned of the 'bright and pretty meteor' destined to smash them.

The ~~novel~~ novel begins with a depiction of a typical worknight for Montag, with a joyed burning of books, these now-outlawed harbingers of Truth, forging a smile on his charcoaled countenance. Montag muses to himself that his life is pleasurable; yet we sense that the smile is really a mocking grimace, seared into the flesh of his face under the constant crucible of enforcing ignorance as an occupation. This, and his true unhappiness with a life of mindless work, mindless entertainments, mindless acquisition of possessions and mindless wife, must be concealed from himself behind the clownish mask of Fun!—else he will break down utterly under the strain of dissatisfaction.

Yet on that same night, a sequence of unrelated events—an encounter with guileless teenage visionary Clarisse, remembrance of the contraband books he has spirited away in the ventilator shaft, most importantly ~~of all~~ ^{the} discover of his wife's attempted suicide—destroy the pretense of his life's normality, and now he must decide: continue as before, after he has admitted to himself his own misery, or strike out on this new path of self-discovery.

He chooses the latter, but all is not simple yet; indeed, the complexities compound on one another. How is he to reveal the truth he is discovering, of America's benighted condition, without incapacitating others with misery or facing their expressionless incomprehension? How to fully realize his potential, if it exists, for gaining knowledge from stolen literature? Most importantly, how to do this when the fire Chief Beatty, a sinister snake in the apple tree, suspects him; when his own wife rejects any disturbance of her blind consumerist paralysis?

This daunting task Montag now faces: to ~~not be seen as~~ strive for a truth marked "Do not read - burn immediately". So he meanders through the weeks, presenting a continued lie of ~~the~~ conformity to peers while cherishing moments shared with the calm and introverted Clarisse. Yet these moments are stolen from him when she is killed by one of modern life's ubiquitous car accidents rendered by teenage recklessness; Montag's anchor of Truth is gone, incinerated as with every dead person.

Montag witnesses an ~~old~~ elderly woman who performs immolation of books and self rather than allow the firemen to ~~be~~ contaminate ~~in~~ the latter case, implicitly, herself. This serves such a blow to his conscience that he decides he must now reveal the Truth, so that the bombs will not fall from the jet planes, so that more women will not die with their books. So that more classes will not be ostracized as conspiring 'anti-socials' and run down in automotive lunacy. So, he proceeds the only way he knows how, confronting his wife's friends with their mundane horror of their lives, contacting an old English Professor who might assist him in his search for meaning in plundered literature. Beatty must finally be killed, a sucker and willing victim of fire, to protect the Professor Faber and the wisdom he represents; and Montag runs desperately for the countryside, racing against the ~~American~~ police and impending nuclear war, bearing the knowledge of the Bible which he has read and struggled to memorize. Escape into the country ~~is~~ returns him to reality, and to the intellectuals ~~is~~ turned refugees somnolent who assure him that, after civilization's collapse, they ~~is~~ will collectively bear the knowledge in their heads and in their books, so that humanity may never again throw itself on the atomic phoenix's funeral pyre of war.

Thus is Montag made the everyman ~~is~~ seeker and guardian of truth in Bradbury's prophecy of an America voluntarily imprisoned in the malks of rapid consumerism. When to do so would kill him and the knowledge he bears, Montag ~~is~~ protects the secret of his covert wisdom; and when, at last, it is too late and the bombs are falling, he escapes to live another day, leaving this dead city and generation behind so that he might enlighten the next.

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In Nathaniel Hawthorne's novel, The Scarlet Letter, Hester Prynne stubbornly refuses to reveal who the father of her daughter, Pearl, is. Hester became pregnant out of wedlock ~~and~~ which was viewed as a horrible sin in the strict Puritan society in which she lived. She was disgraced for her sin ^{and} forced to wear a scarlet letter "A" on her breast which branded her as an adulterer and ~~secluded~~ ^{isolated} her and her daughter from the rest of society. She could have given out the name of her partner and shared the blame with him, but instead she refused to tell.

Her refusal was done out of love. Arthur Dimmesdale, Pearl's father, was a ^{popular} minister. If he had been revealed as Hester's lover, he would have been completely and utterly disgraced. It would have been ~~a~~ horrible blow to his position as minister, and he would have lost his career standings. Hester refuses to tell on him because she loves him so much that she would rather be isolated and alone than ruin Dimmesdale's reputation.

Hawthorne's novel is a ~~et~~ harsh criticism of the rigid Puritan society. Hester and Dimmesdale's love is torn apart by the Puritan rules, and Hester is ~~horribly~~ treated horribly by the whole town. She is cast out and looked down upon. ~~People~~ The children ~~refuse~~ mock Pearl and refuse to play with her. All of Hester's good deeds for the town (ie. her sewing and other work she does) is overlooked. The only thing ~~is~~ she is seen as is the scarlet letter or adulteress. Her determination and stubbornness not to reveal her lover ~~and~~ prove that she is better than most of the society around her. Hester's ~~love for~~ Dimmesdale decision not to reveal

Dimmesdale says a lot about her character. It proves how strong of a woman she is, and it proves ~~to~~ that her love for Dimmesdale is true. Dimmesdale's self-torment and agony over letting Hester protect him, show that he loves her as well. Dimmesdale wants to confess and receive punishment for his crimes, but is unable to do so. He ~~is~~ is such a weak man that he can not manage it and his reputation is so high that even when he does say things he is not taken seriously. Dimmesdale becomes physically ill over his feelings of guilt, and it doesn't help that Hester's husband, Chillingworth, is secretly manipulating and torturing Dimmesdale ~~as~~ as a way to ~~see~~ get revenge.

The whole novel revolves around ~~Hester~~ the abuse the Hester receives from society about her sin, and the abuse Dimmesdale gives himself over not being able to confess. The climax of the novel is resolved when Dimmesdale finally confesses in front of the whole town in the exact spot where Hester was ~~forced to sit~~ publically humiliated as part of her punishment. After Dimmesdale's confession, he dies in Hester's arms and is finally at peace with himself. The novel is about how the harshness of the Puritan Society affected Hester and ~~Dimmesdale~~ ~~how~~ ^{the} guilt eventually killed Dimmesdale.

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IN "A DOLL HOUSE" THE SECRET THAT IS KEPT IS WHAT THE WHOLE PLAY IS ABOUT. EVERY ASPECT OF THIS ~~PLAYS~~ PLOT ~~BY~~ REVOLVES AROUND A BIG SECRET KEPT BY TORVALD'S WIFE. ~~THE~~ BY WITHHOLDING THIS SECRET FROM HER HUSBAND THE STORY TAKES ITS SHAPE.

WHILE TORVALD WAS ILL HIS WIFE BORROWED A SIGNIFICANT SUM OF MONEY FROM A MAN NAMED KROGSTAD, IN ORDER TO SAVE HER HUSBANDS LIFE. HOWEVER TORVALD WAS VERY MUCH AGAINST THE IDEA OF BORROWING MONEY AND IF HE KNEW HIS WIFE HAD DONE THIS HE WOULD HAVE BEEN EXTREMELY ANGRY. TORVALD BELIEVED IT WOULD RUIN HIS REPUTATION FOR THAT WAS WHAT HE CARED ABOUT MOST.

IT WAS IMPORTANT FOR TORVALD'S WIFE TO KEEP THE SECRET OF BORROWING MONEY FROM KROGSTAD FROM HIM BECAUSE HE WOULD HAVE DISOWNED HER. EVERY BIT OF MONEY SHE GOT FOR CLOTHES OR FOOD SHE WOULD PUT SOME ASIDE TO PAY KROGSTAD BACK. HOWEVER HER CHOICE TO HOLD THE SECRET ONLY GOT WORSE WHEN TORVALD WAS PREPARED TO DISMISS KROGSTAD FROM HIS JOB AT THE BANK. KROGSTAD IMMEDIATELY THREATENED TORVALD'S HUSBAND THAT IF SHE DIDN'T USE HER INFLUENCES TO MAKE HER HUSBAND KEEP HIM AT THE BANK HE WOULD DISCLOSE THE SECRET.

THROUGHOUT THE PLAY TORVALD'S WIFE TRIES DISTRACTING TORVALD FROM READING A LETTER THAT WAS POSTED BY KROGSTAD— REVEALING THE SECRET. IT CAUSES A LOT OF TENSION IN THE PLAY AND SOON CAUSES TORVALD TO BECOME VERY SUSPICIOUS OF SOMETHING GOING ON.

WHEN TORVALD READS THE LETTER FROM KROGSTAD HE CANNOT BELIEVE IT AND GETS EXTREMELY ANGRY. HE SAYS HIS REPUTATION IS RUINED AND NO LONGER WANTS ANYTHING TO DO WITH HIS WIFE. HOWEVER KROGSTAD HAD POSTED ANOTHER LETTER SAYING HE WOULD CANCEL THE DEBT. WHEN TORVALD HEARS THIS HE BECOMES EXCITED AND SAYS HE WANTS HIS WIFE BACK. HIS WIFE HOWEVER, SEES THAT THE ONLY THING HE CARED ABOUT WAS HIS REPUTATION AND THEREFORE LEFT HIM.

THE SECRET WAS WHAT THE WHOLE PLAY WAS BASED AROUND, AND WHEN IT WAS REVEALED IT ULTIMATELY SEPARATED TORVALD AND HIS WIFE.

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