

Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* is considered one of the great science fiction novels of all time, due in large part to its futuristic style. Bradbury predicted a number of advancements in technology, as well as changes in society, which have since come to light. It's extremely difficult to predict the future, and clearly Bradbury is better than most at doing so.

Bradbury's predictions, though bold, seem plausible in hindsight. The main prediction he makes is that, in this future, society is dumbed down by entertainment, and all intellect is lost in programming designed to keep citizens zombies; books are forbidden and those who read are jailed, all in an effort to keep society mindless. These predictions coincided with McCarthyism in the United States, a time when some Americans were prosecuted for disagreeing with the government, and the ideals of communism were under siege. It also followed the downfall of Nazi Germany, when books were burned to suppress the masses and media was used to brainwash millions. Bradbury took it one step further and used technology that hadn't yet existed to expand on the idea of using media as propaganda. History supported his vision of the future, and many of his predictions have since come to pass, which makes his future believable.

In the novel, Bradbury writes of a future where books have become obsolete, and the few that remain will be destroyed. As a result, Americans in the novel are addicted to other forms of electronic entertainment, with multiple "parlor walls" in their living rooms. He also writes of a "seashell radio," which is worn over the person's ears to distract them from the outside world. Even the news is another form of entertainment, with entertaining manhunts. All of these predictions are now true: Americans have big screen televisions, iPods, and watch the news as another source of entertainment. Beyond that, today's society continues to be dumbed down with services like Twitter, which require users to convey thoughts in 140 characters or less. Americans are drowning in media, whether it be on the Internet, with Facebook, or on the thousands of channels now available on televisions. With these advancements comes the risk

of losing touch with the past, and ignoring the problems which we'll face in the future. Americans are very much living in the now, engrossed in various forms of media. It's unclear if this will become harmful, because with these advancements comes increased communication between different societies, which allows for information to flow like never before. So far, there have been positives to these advancements, most recently in the Middle Eastern and North African revolutions, where people used Twitter and Facebook to communicate and plan protests, and continue to use to spread news about their progress.

Bradbury has said that he's not trying to describe the future, he's trying to prevent it. While many of his predictions have come true, some of them haven't. Only time will tell if today's society will turn into something similar to Bradbury's in *Fahrenheit 451*.