

# Learning Opportunity

## Research Enhances Reading Assignment

Honors English I students at North High School are preparing to read Ray Bradbury's 1953 classic dystopian novel *Fahrenheit 451*. The central theme of the novel is the conflict between freedom of thought and censorship.

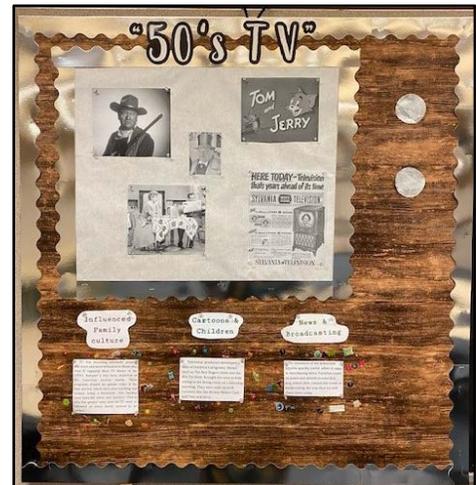
Language Arts instructor Leah Ramstad had her students complete a research project prior to reading the novel to better understand world events and society's mindset during the timeframe when the novel was written.



Students broke into groups, selected from a list of topics connected to the novel, did research on their topic, organized the information, planned, and then created a bulletin board. Each group presented their bulletin board information to the class and answered any questions from other students. “This is the first time I have assigned this project with my Honors English I students. It introduces important connections from the 1950s to *Fahrenheit 451*,” said Ramstad. “It is essential for English Language Arts teachers to make the connections of historical, cultural, and social issues during

the time a novel is written. There is no doubt that Ray Bradbury’s work reflects many situations citizens struggled with during the 1950s and allowing students to explore those topics helps create a holistic discussion of the novel.”

Bradbury's novel is set in a futuristic society that burns books to control dangerous ideas and unhappy concepts. The novel tells the story of Guy Montag, a “fireman” who questions society’s book-burning policy and undergoes suffering and transformation as a result. The research into the 1950s topics increased the students’ understanding of concepts and subject matter utilized by Bradbury.



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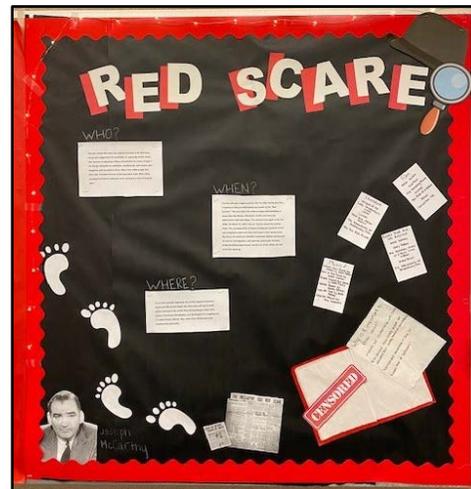


# Learning Opportunity, continued

“The bulletin board project helped everyone understand the ‘culture of fear’ that occurred in *Fahrenheit 451*. The fearfulness of people during the Cold War and the Red Scare really translates into *Fahrenheit 451*, but in the book, people are scared of knowledge and thinking.”  
– Everett McConnell, ninth grader

“[doing this research project] helped me realize the main plot of the book and what it was probably going to be about. I also learned a lot about book censorship as well as how and why books get banned in the first place.” – Larissa Lahaise, ninth grader

The *Fahrenheit 451* bulletin boards are posted in Ms. Ramstad’s classroom, in Team Center 313, and in North High School’s Mathematics wing. Bulletin boards are scheduled to be up until the end of the month.



*NOTE: The novel’s title refers to the auto-ignition point of paper—the temperature at which it will catch fire without being exposed to an external flame. Bradbury asserted that “book-paper” burns at 451 degrees.*

