

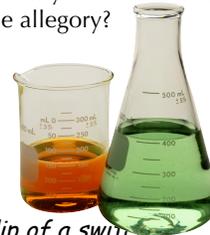
# Breaking the Code

Critical Thinking in Science Fiction

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Instructions:** Identify the elements that comprise sci-fi: *science*, *setting*, and *speculation*. Then see if you can infer what the message or warning might be: What does this “alien” story tell us about ourselves? What is the allegory?

Title: *451*



## SCIENCE

List two separate and significant elements of future science.

1. *Mechanical hound that seems alive—it “sleeps,” growls, even dreams—but kills at the flip of a switch.*
2. *Jet cars, fireproof houses, glove entries, and “TV Parlors” that cover four entire walls*

## “ALIEN” SETTING

Identify the setting (*present*, *future*, *alternate universe*, *alternate reality*, *alternate history*) then describe its “alien” features.

1. *Future*
2. *Technology of convenience has distracted the country, emotions are ignored, people are numb, violence is accepted, and history has been re-written at the expense of personal intimacy, human contact, and free thought.*



## SPECULATION

Identify two general thematic ideas explored and find a *meaningful* example of each from the story. Think in terms of universal concepts: *themes*—not plot or conflict or features. Use your “Prime Directive” to help. Choose wisely: the thematic ideas you select may flow into the larger message or insight you will develop next.

1. *Willful Ignorance*  
ex. *This society gives up “thinking” and “learning” because it is easier and often less painful not be in conflict or to be challenged, but rather simply to follow and distract.*
2. *Conformity vs. Individuality*  
ex. *Montag struggles with two opposing urges: to conform to social norms or to pursue his own beliefs. To balance the two seems impossible and he soon finds that one may come only at the expense of the other.*
3. *Distraction vs. Happiness*  
ex. *In her attempt to be happy, Mildred merely distracts herself with “things.” Like many, she allows technology to consume her and “fill” the emptiness inside her.*



## CENTRAL ALLEGORICAL MESSAGE OR INSIGHT

Do not tell me about the story. Tell me what we’re meant to learn from the story. Connect to us. Do not use any variation of the phrases: “I believe...” “Anything is possible...” “Stand up for what you believe...” “Never give up...” “Careful what you wish for...” or “Don’t judge a book by its cover...” Be insightful.

*When we replace irritation with comfort (whether through legal censorship or personal avoidance), we lose a part of our humanity and are reduced to drones. Individual growth ceases, as we spend our time distracting ourselves, and when individuality fails, community fails, then humanity fails, and the world fall apart right in front of us—but we’re all “sleeping.”*

