*Fahrenheit 451* – Part 2 “The Sieve and the Sand”

1. Montag decides he needs a teacher. Why is the teacher an important component to his learning? Define teacher. How are teachers important to you as students? How do you define a successful teacher?
2. Faber says that people need quality information, the leisure to digest it, and the freedom to act on what they learn. He defines quality information as a textured and detailed knowledge of life, knowledge of the “pores” on the face of humanity. Faber agrees with Mildred that television seems more “real” than books, but he dislikes it because it is too invasive and controlling. Books at least allow the reader to put them down, giving one time to think and reason about the information they contain.
3. Faber insists that it’s not the books themselves that Montag is looking for, but the meaning they contain. The same meaning could be included in existing media like television and radio, but people no longer demand it. Faber compares their superficial society to flowers trying to live on flowers instead of on good, substantive dirt: people are unwilling to accept the basic realities and unpleasant aspects of life.
4. Mildred’s denial to talk about Clarisse’s death is related to the widespread ignorance of history and fear of books, because history and books connect readers to the dead.
5. Discuss the concept of the “thing” vs. “the meaning”. How is one incomplete without the other?
6. An important symbol is expressed in the title of this section, “The Sieve and the Sand,” which comes from Montag’s childhood memory of trying to fill a sieve with sand on the beach to get a dime from a mischievous cousin and crying at the futility of the task. He compares this memory to his attempt to read the whole Bible as quickly as possible on the subway in the hope that, if he reads fast enough, some of the material will stay in his memory. The sand is symbolic of the tangible truth Montag seeks and the sieve of the human mind seeking truth. Truth is elusive and, the metaphor suggests, impossible to grasp in any permanent way.
7. Religious symbolism: Book of Job; Comparing Mildred’s friends to religious objects (he doesn’t understand either); fire and water making wine; washing his hands out of guilt