Fahrenheit 451 and the Monomyth

Throughout the novel *Fahrenheit 451* we see examples of the Monomyth. The stages of the Monomyth are Departure, Initiation, and Return. Montag follows each of these stages throughout the story and the Monomyth is demonstrated through his actions.

The first stage, Departure, is demonstrated in the very beginning of the book when Montag is at work like normal and witnesses the woman who kills herself. Before this occurred Montag actually enjoyed his job and was never curious about books. But the fact that this woman was willing to die for the books she had, rather than live, intrigued him and caused him to steal a book. "'You weren't there, you didn't see' he said. 'There must be something in books, things we can't imagine, to make a woman stay in a burning house; there must be something there. You don't stay for nothing (51).'" The fact that she lights her own match and kills herself confuses Montag so much that he has to know what's in books to cause such a reaction. It is because of this that Montag is led into Initiation and ends up following into the rest of the Monomyth.

Montag goes through Initiation when he takes the books and contacts Faber and they plan on how to destroy the firemen and get people to want to read books again. Along the way Montag fails by making mistakes such as
revealing he has books and reading poetry to his neighbor. This causes Beaty to come after Montag and make him burn his own house down. “On the way downtown, he was so completely alone with his terrible error that he felt the necessity for the strange warmthness and goodness that came from a familiar and gentle voice speaking in the night (102).” This shows how Montag made a mistake and he realized this too late. Part of the Initiation process is making mistakes along the way and realizing these mistakes. It is necessary for these mistakes to happen so that he can undergo the rest of the Monomyth process and to complete the last stage, to Return.

Montag Returns when he discovers the band of people along the railroad tracks who have all remembered books and keep the contents in their heads. It is their hope that one day they will be able to pass on the books to future generations. By finding these people Montag feels like he finally has somewhere he belongs and he finally feels some sort of happiness, which he had been lacking his whole life. In the end, after the city burns, they finally head back towards the city to see the destruction. Part of the Return process is finding happiness and then going back home, which is exactly what Montag undergoes. “I want to see everything now. And while none of it will be me when it goes in, after a while it’ll all gather together inside and it’ll be me (162).” Montag is finally discovering himself and realizing what he needs in his life to be happy and to move on, he is discovering who he is and what he wants in life, and this is a key part of the Return.
It is through these various events that we see the Monomyth portrayed in *Fahrenheit 451*. The Departure, Initiation, and Return are all very evident throughout the story and it is through Montag and his actions and choices that we see the Monomyth play out the way it does.