



# ENGAGING THE BLOODY CLOWN

Changing How We Approach the Media

A clown dressed in white soaks himself in gasoline and explodes, coloring the walls in running red. Mildred laughs. If only she could have another screen on the fourth wall, she would be happy.

Sound familiar?

Of course it is.

American novelist Ray Bradbury predicted a half century ago that Americans would prefer to entertain themselves over educate themselves. His book *Fahrenheit 451* is the story of Montag, a firefighter whose job is to burn all illegal material. Namely, all books ever.

But rather than Montag, we focus on Montag's wife, Mildred. While Montag desires to learn something real, even if it hurts, Mildred coos happily in front of the TV spanning the three walls of their entertainment room.

Montag stands at the door, having just arrived home. He watches as another pair of clowns hack each other apart with chainsaws. He licks his numb lips. "Millie? Does the White Clown love you?"

Mildred blinks slowly. "Why'd you ask a silly question like that?" She then goes back to her TV program.

Now one may say there are a great many educational series out there. However, the problem wasn't the graphic material which Montag's wife was laughing at, it was the fact that Mildred was only watching television for television's sake.

Look at the amusing 2023 slasher film *Winnie-the-Pooh: Blood and Honey*, which turns our favorite childhood character into an animal-human horror shoving young women into wood chippers. Wow.

This film isn't the problem. The problem is the way we view film.

Consider the person who returns home from a hard day of work and crashes in front of the television. They aren't there to watch a specific program, they're just there to exist, and



watching gives them something else to do while their brain relaxes. That's what Mildred is doing in front of her screen. She's passively watching. Not proactively engaging.

Now imagine what would happen if Mildred stopped laughing and started thinking. As she watches the white clown's antics she reflects on what being human really means. She leaves having changed and grown because of her viewing experience.

We should learn to critically approach film, literature, theater, and music. Not to be entertained, but to be intellectually stimulated. To dissect media and learn from them, judging the media on the message they send to us.

How should we go about deciding which media to see? A good test would be to ask whether you would watch this film just to be entertained? Did you leave with a different emotion than you expected to feel?

Even if we do spend most of our lives in school, for all the time we spend there, that's not where we want to be. Instead we patiently wait for the highlight of our day: rewatching 'Avatar: the Last Airbender' for the third time.



The world would be a gray and lifeless place if it was only made up of our opinions. There would be nothing new to explore. Choose to learn real world skills from your books and music. Choose to educate yourself and look for intellectually stimulating ideas of all sorts.

Stop the cycle.

Save humanity.

I'm not joking.

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