*The central character in a work of literature is called the protagonist. The protagonist usually initiates the main action of the story and often overcomes a flaw, such as weakness or ignorance, to achieve a new understanding by the work’s end. A protagonist who acts with great honor or courage may be called a hero.*

*An antihero is a protagonist lacking these qualities. Instead of being dignified, brave, idealistic, or purposeful, the antihero may be cowardly, self-interested, or weak. The protagonist’s journey is enriched by encounters with characters who hold differing beliefs. One such character type, a foil, has traits that contrast with the protagonist’s and highlight important features of the main character’s personality. The* ***most important foil, the antagonist****, opposes the protagonist, barring or complicating his or her success.*

***Captain Beatty, the fire chief, is a key foil and a historian of sorts****. While Montag once followed Beatty’s values, he now resists Beatty’s commitment to burning books.*

*Meanwhile,* ***Faber*** *represents a musty, academic link to the past.* ***Clarisse McClellan****, a teenager, longs for the romantic days of front porches and rocking chairs, complaining, “we never ask questions.” Then* ***Mildred****, the model citizen, attempts suicide while living in a world enchanted by television.*

**Discussion Activities**

Divide the class into groups to examine the role of foils in the novel.

Assign each group a character: Mildred, Clarisse, Faber, or Beatty.

Ask students to review the first ninety-one pages of the novel and look for occasions when this character brings out dramatic responses from Montag.

How does the character lead Montag toward self-realization?

How does Montag’s relationship to the character change?

Have students present their conclusions to the class, using specific textual support.