

Shelby County Schools
Extended Learning Packet



English/ Language Arts
Grade 9

Grade 9 Educational Websites and Web Resources

Title of Resource	Web Address	Description	Student Access
TedEd	www.ed.ted.com	Provides a digital media library of educational videos and discussions.	Students are able to view content for free and without an account.
Khan Academy	https://www.khanacademy.org	Students will be able to get additional practice with skills in various subjects and test prep.	Students will need to sign up for a free account if they do not already have an account.
CommonLit	www.commonlit.org	Provides a digital library and gives students rigorous practice with complex text and questions.	Students may need to sign up for a free account if they do not already have one.
NewsELA	www.newsela.com	Provides a digital library and gives students rigorous practice with complex text and questions.	Some content is free and students are able to engage with the current events with a free account.
Tween Tribune	https://www.tweentribune.com/	Provides a digital library and gives students rigorous practice with complex text and questions.	Students are able to read various articles without an account, however students will need a free account to access quizzes and questions.

Name: _____ Class: _____

Burning a Book

By William Stafford
1986

William Stafford (1914-1993) was an American poet. In 1970, he was named Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress, a position now known as Poet Laureate. In this poem, the speaker describes book burning, a common method of censorship in which people set fire to books they object to on political, cultural, or religious grounds. In a 1991 interview, Stafford once said that he wrote this poem after purposefully burning a book that he found "attractive, shallow, [and] misleading..." "Why should I keep it around?" he thought. As you read, identify the main idea of each stanza.

- [1] Protecting each other, right in the center
a few pages glow a long time.
The cover goes first, then outer leaves
curling away, then spine and a scattering.
- [5] Truth, brittle and faint, burns easily,
its fire as hot as the fire lies make—
flame doesn't care. You can usually find
a few charred¹ words in the ashes.
- And some books ought to burn, trying for
character
- [10] but just faking it. More disturbing
than book ashes are whole libraries that no one
got around to writing—desolate²
towns, miles of unthought in cities,
and the terrorized countryside where wild dogs
- [15] own anything that moves. If a book
isn't written, no one needs to burn it—
ignorance can dance in the absence of fire.

So I've burned books. And there are many
I haven't even written, and nobody has.



"Book burning" by pcorreia is licensed under CC BY 2.0.

William Stafford, "Burning a Book" from Ask Me: 100 Essential Poems. Copyright © 1986 by William Stafford. Used with the permission of The Permissions Company, Inc. on behalf of Graywolf Press, Minneapolis, Minnesota, www.graywolfpress.org.

1. **Charred (adjective):** blackened or discolored from burning
2. **Desolate (adjective):** deserted; in a state of dreary emptiness

Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which of the following best summarizes the theme of this poem? [RL.2]
 - A. Ignorance and a lack of new ideas are greater threats to society than burning books.
 - B. Book burning creates ignorance and chaos in societies; free speech should be encouraged.
 - C. The worst threat of censorship is its ability to erase prominent writers from history.
 - D. We are all guilty of censorship when we reject ideas that do not align with our own.

2. PART B: Which lines from the poem best support the answer to Part A? [RL.1]
 - A. "The cover goes first, then outer leaves / curling away, then spine and a scattering" (Lines 3-4)
 - B. "More disturbing / than book ashes are whole libraries that no one / got around to writing" (Lines 10-12)
 - C. "the terrorized countryside where wild dogs / own anything that moves" (Lines 14-15)
 - D. "So I've burned books. And there are many / I haven't even written, and nobody has." (Lines 18-19)

3. PART A: As used in line 13, what does the word "unthought" mean? [RL.4]
 - A. hostility toward censorship
 - B. an inability to read
 - C. acceptance of book-burning
 - D. lack of ideas

4. PART B: Which of the following phrases from the text best supports the answer to Part A? [RL.1]
 - A. "trying for character / but just faking it" (Lines 9-10)
 - B. "whole libraries that no one/ got around to writing" (Lines 11-12)
 - C. "terrorized countryside" (Line 14)
 - D. "where wild dogs / own anything that moves" (Lines 14-15)

5. Describe the structure of the poem, and explain how this structure supports the development of the theme. Cite evidence from the poem in your response. [RL.5]

Discussion Questions

Directions: *Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.*

1. Why does the poet believe that “whole libraries that no one / got around to writing” is “More disturbing than book ashes?” Do you agree with him?
2. During the Nazi occupation of Germany, countless books were burned, including many by Jewish authors. Among those writers whose works were destroyed was Heinrich Heine, whose famous play, “Almansor,” includes the following line: “Where they burn books, they will also ultimately burn people.” In the context of this poem and the events of history, what are the dangers of censorship? Are these dangers more or less important than the dangers Stafford writes about?
3. In the context of this poem, what is the goal of education? How does the production of books aim to advance that goal? Cite evidence from this text, your own experience, and other literature, art, or history in your answer.
4. In the context of this poem, which is more important: freedom or security? Cite evidence from this text, your own experience, and other literature, art, or history in your answer.

Name: _____ Class: _____

I Am Very Real

By Kurt Vonnegut
1973

Kurt Vonnegut (1922-2007) was an American author and humorist. One month after an English teacher at Drake High School in North Dakota decided to teach Kurt Vonnegut's novel Slaughterhouse-Five in his classroom, Charles McCarthy, the head of the school board, decided that the novel's "obscene language" was not appropriate. Every copy of Slaughterhouse-Five at Drake High School was burned in the school's furnace. In response, Vonnegut wrote the following letter to McCarthy. As you read, take notes on the author's main arguments throughout the letter.

[1] Dear Mr. McCarthy:

I am writing to you in your capacity as chairman of the Drake School Board. I am among those American writers whose books have been destroyed in the now famous furnace of your school.

Certain members of your community have suggested that my work is evil. This is extraordinarily insulting to me. The news from Drake indicates to me that books and writers are very unreal to you people. I am writing this letter to let you know how real I am.



"Burning Books Page1" by Jason Verwey is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0.

I want you to know, too, that my publisher and I have done absolutely nothing to exploit the disgusting news from Drake. We are not clapping each other on the back, crowing about all the books we will sell because of the news. We have declined to go on television, have written no fiery letters to editorial pages, have granted no lengthy interviews. We are angered and sickened and saddened. And no copies of this letter have been sent to anybody else. You now hold the only copy in your hands. It is a strictly private letter from me to the people of Drake, who have done so much to damage my reputation in the eyes of their children and then in the eyes of the world. Do you have the courage and ordinary decency to show this letter to the people, or will it, too, be consigned¹ to the fires of your furnace?

[5] I gather from what I read in the papers and hear on television that you imagine me, and some other writers, too, as being sort of rat-like people who enjoy making money from poisoning the minds of young people. I am in fact a large, strong person, fifty-one years old, who did a lot of farm work as a boy, who is good with tools. I have raised six children, three my own and three adopted. They have all turned out well. Two of them are farmers. I am a combat infantry veteran from World War II, and hold a Purple Heart. I have earned whatever I own by hard work. I have never been arrested or sued for anything. I am so much trusted with young people and by young people that I have served on the faculties of the University of Iowa, Harvard, and the City College of New York. Every year I receive at least a dozen invitations to be commencement speaker at colleges and high schools. My books are probably more widely used in schools than those of any other living American fiction writer.

1. **Consign (verb):** to send or give

If you were to bother to read my books, to behave as educated persons would, you would learn that they are not sexy, and do not argue in favor of wildness of any kind. They beg that people be kinder and more responsible than they often are. It is true that some of the characters speak coarsely.² That is because people speak coarsely in real life. Especially soldiers and hardworking men speak coarsely, and even our most sheltered children know that. And we all know, too, that those words really don't damage children much. They didn't damage us when we were young. It was evil deeds and lying that hurt us.

After I have said all this, I am sure you are still ready to respond, in effect, "Yes, yes – but it still remains our right and our responsibility to decide what books our children are going to be made to read in our community." This is surely so. But it is also true that if you exercise that right and fulfill that responsibility in an ignorant, harsh, un-American manner, then people are entitled to call you bad citizens and fools. Even your own children are entitled to call you that.

I read in the newspaper that your community is mystified by the outcry from all over the country about what you have done. Well, you have discovered that Drake is a part of American civilization, and your fellow Americans can't stand it that you have behaved in such an uncivilized way. Perhaps you will learn from this that books are sacred to free men for very good reasons, and that wars have been fought against nations which hate books and burn them. If you are an American, you must allow all ideas to circulate freely in your community, not merely your own.

If you and your board are now determined to show that you in fact have wisdom and maturity when you exercise your powers over the education of your young, then you should acknowledge that it was a rotten lesson you taught young people in a free society when you denounced and then burned books – books you hadn't even read. You should also resolve to expose your children to all sorts of opinions and information, in order that they will be better equipped to make decisions and to survive.

[10] Again: you have insulted me, and I am a good citizen, and I am very real.

Kurt Vonnegut

© 1973, Kurt Vonnegut. For nonprofit educational use only.

2. refers to crude or offensive language

Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which of the following statements expresses a central idea of the text?
 - A. School boards should not have the power to ban books from classrooms.
 - B. It is immoral to claim that controversial books may poison students' minds.
 - C. Burning books goes against the freedoms that Americans hold dear.
 - D. Like all good citizens, Kurt Vonnegut has not lied or produced evil work.

2. PART B: Which of the following quotes best supports the answer to Part A?
 - A. "I am a combat infantry veteran from World War II, and hold a Purple Heart... I am so much trusted with young people and by young people that I have served on the faculties of the University of Iowa, Harvard, and the City College of New York." (Paragraph 5)
 - B. "And we all know, too, that those words really don't damage children much. They didn't damage us when we were young. It was evil deeds and lying that hurt us." (Paragraph 6)
 - C. "books are sacred to free men for very good reasons, and that wars have been fought against nations which hate books and burn them. If you are an American, you must allow all ideas to circulate freely" (Paragraph 8)
 - D. "If you and your board are now determined to show... maturity when you exercise your powers over the education of your young, then you should acknowledge that it was a rotten lesson you taught young people" (Paragraph 9)

3. PART A: What does the word "exploit" most closely mean as it is used in paragraph 4?
 - A. to produce
 - B. to abuse
 - C. to benefit from
 - D. to criticize or disagree with

4. PART B: Which phrase from paragraph 4 best supports the answer to Part A?
 - A. "the disgusting news from Drake"
 - B. "crowing about all the books we will sell because of the news"
 - C. "to damage my reputation in the eyes of their children and then in the eyes of the world"
 - D. "the courage and ordinary decency"

5. Which statement best describes how the author uses rhetoric in paragraphs 4-5 to advance his argument?
 - A. The author presents the contributions he has made to the country in order to prove that he is a real American.
 - B. The author describes his background in order to explain why coarse language is simply part of how he speaks.
 - C. The author portrays himself as a father and a veteran as further proof of his desire to shield the nation's youth from harmful books.
 - D. The author explains that he is a man of integrity in order to show why the school's reactions were excessive and wrong.

6. How does the author expand his argument in paragraphs 7-8?

Discussion Questions

Directions: Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.

1. What do you think Vonnegut means when he says that he is a “real person”? Why does he work so hard to convey this point? Explain your answer.
2. According to Vonnegut, what does being American mean? Do you agree with Vonnegut when he says the burning of books is un-American? Why or why not?
3. In the context of this letter, which is more important: freedom of speech, or the protection of young people from what some may see as harmful ideas? Cite evidence from this text, your own experience, and other literature, art, or history in your answer.
4. In the context of this letter, what makes America unique? Cite evidence from this text, your own experience, and other literature, art, or history in your answer.

Name: _____ Class: _____

Why Do People Follow The Crowd?

By ABC News
January 12, 2006

Dr. Gregory Berns, a professor of behavioral science, conducted several experiments for the purpose of answering an age-old question: Why do people follow the crowd? ABC's Primetime recreated two of these experiments using several unsuspecting people. As you read, take notes on what evidence the authors use to support their claims.

- [1] It was a classic episode on the old *Candid Camera* show – people getting on an elevator and turning backward just because everyone else did, and we all laughed. We laughed again during the movie *Mean Girls*, when an act of teenage revenge – cutting nasty Queen Bee Regina's T-shirt during gym class (an act meant to insult her) – became a school fashion trend instead.

It turns out the joke is on us. These two examples illustrate something that we humans don't like to admit about ourselves: We follow the pack. Like birds in a flock or sheep in a pasture, we follow – sometimes at our own peril.¹

But why are people so conformist?² That is the question that Dr. Gregory Berns, an associate professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at Atlanta's Emory University, tried to answer in a recent groundbreaking experiment and paper.

Primetime set up its own demonstration recreating Berns' work.



"3D" by trash world is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

Failing a Test

- [5] We gathered a group of people together for a test of "visual perception." The actual test was simple – to mentally rotate some 3-D shapes and compare them to see whether they were the same or different.

First, the volunteers wrote down their answers to 10 questions privately. But then they had to give the next series of answers out loud for everyone to hear.

1. **Peril (noun):** great danger
2. **Conformist (adjective):** behaving or thinking like everyone else rather than doing things that are original

But this test came with a twist. One of the participants, Jocelyn, was in on the experiment, with the answers in her hand. Everyone else had been told to follow her lead, except for one participant, Tony. He's the only person in the room not in the know. He was being set up to see whether he would follow the pack.

When the group gave the right answer, Tony agreed. And when everyone gave the wrong answer – Tony still agreed.

Unwittingly,³ Tony had demonstrated Berns' point precisely. The group's influence on Tony profoundly altered the results: He went from 90 percent on his written test to 10 percent when he heard the others' answers.

[10] "You know, five people are seeing it and I'm not. ... I just went along with the answers," Tony said.

Tony wasn't alone. *Primetime* put seven other unsuspecting test subjects on the hot seat. Barbara, for example, got 70 percent on the written test, but her score fell to 30 percent when she listened to others' answers.

"I think I tend to do that, doubt myself when everyone else has their own opinion," Barbara said.

David and Graham, unlike the others, gave the right answers, even when the group didn't.

"I wanted to go with what I felt was the correct answer, and trust myself, and that's what I did," Graham said.

Social Graces

[15] *Primetime* tried out another scenario, this time in a more social, relaxed setting. We invited a group of strangers to Jean George's Asian restaurant in lower Manhattan for a fabulous dinner – and a surprise.

Party planner Colin Cowie and his friend, Donna D'Cruz, were in on the experiment. Their role was to exhibit outlandish behavior most people wouldn't dream of while out at dinner with a group of strangers.

Cowie and D'Cruz licked their fingers, a dinner table no-no. Cowie picked his teeth. The guests initially seemed not to take the bait – until dessert rolled around.

D'Cruz told everyone they should pick up pieces of mango face first, using their mouth. Eventually, people who were total strangers at the beginning of the evening were passing fruit back and forth, mouth to mouth.

Only Harold and Maria, a Canadian couple, passed on the gustatory familiarity. Finally, Harold was the only one who dared to ask, what is the point of the dinner?

[20] Cowie explained the experiment to the group. "I think because we broke the rules, and we made things possible at the table, several of you followed suit with it."

3. **Unwittingly** (*adverb*): without realizing; without being aware

One woman at the table said: "I think the majority of people will look to see what others are doing and follow their example."

Conforming Can Have Dangerous Consequences

Both of these tests are examples of our human need to conform. In fact, Berns' experiment is a variation of one done many years ago by another scientist trying to decipher⁴ an extremely vicious instance of conformity – why so many Germans followed Adolf Hitler down the path to death and destruction. Berns says there are two ways to explain conformist behavior.

"One is that they know what their eyes are telling them, and yet they choose to ignore it, and go along with the group to belong to the group," he said.

The second explanation is that hearing other opinions – even if they are wrong – can actually change what we see, distorting⁵ our own perceptions.

- [25] Berns wanted to see what was happening in the brain during his experiment. Using an fMRI,⁶ Berns found that, during the moment of decision, his subjects' brains lit up not in the area where thinking takes place, but in the back of the brain, where vision is interpreted.

Essentially, their brains were scrambling messages – people actually believed what others told them they were seeing, not what they saw with their own eyes.

"What that suggests is that, what people tell you – if enough people are telling you – can actually get mixed in with what your own eyes are telling you," Berns said.

And for those who went against the group, there was another intriguing result: Their brains lit up in a place called the amygdala, which Berns calls "the fear center of the brain."

"And what we are seeing here, we think, is the fear of standing alone," Berns said.

- [30] So why do people follow the pack no matter how ridiculous it seems? Perhaps it's not so much about good and evil, right and wrong, smart or stupid. It might be, as Berns' experiment suggests, that our brains get confused between what it sees and what others tell us.

Just knowing that might help us guard against it.

"Why Do People Follow the Crowd?" from www.abcnews.com, © ABC News. Reprinted with permission, all rights reserved.

4. **Decipher (verb):** to work out what something says or means, even though it is very difficult to read or understand
5. **Distort (verb):** to pull or twist out of shape; to give a misleading or false account or impression of
6. Functional magnetic resonance imaging or functional MRI (fMRI) is a procedure that measures brain activity.

Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. Which of the following best describes a central idea of the text? [RI.2]
 - A. Experiments reveal that people's behavior is greatly influenced by their desire to conform.
 - B. The Nazi's used behavioral experiments to trick German citizens into following the laws that most recognized as immoral.
 - C. An overwhelming desire to fit in encourages people to display bizarre behavior at restaurants.
 - D. People are unable to resist the desire to follow the crowd because it is part of human psychology.

2. PART A: What is meant by the word "gustatory" as it is used in paragraph 19? [RI.4]
 - A. acting strangely
 - B. related to eating
 - C. being reserved and polite
 - D. following what others do

3. PART B: Which detail from the text best supports the answer to Part A? [RI.1]
 - A. "outlandish behavior most people wouldn't dream of" (Paragraph 16)
 - B. "people who were total strangers at the beginning of the evening were passing fruit back and forth, mouth to mouth." (Paragraph 18)
 - C. "Cowie explained the experiment to the group" (Paragraph 20)
 - D. "'the majority of people will look to see what others are doing and follow their example.'" (Paragraph 21)

4. What is the relationship between the Primetime experiments and the Germans who followed Adolf Hitler? [RI.3]
 - A. The experiments reveal the human desire to conform and explain why the Germans were willing to follow Hitler.
 - B. They both demonstrate that even under extreme pressure, some people will resist and do what they think is right.
 - C. The experiments reveal that both that the Germans who followed Adolf Hitler and the people in the experiments cannot be held responsible for following the crowd.
 - D. The experiments illustrate that the Germans were wrong to follow Adolf Hitler, just like the people in the experiment were wrong to follow the crowd.

5. How do paragraphs 1-2 contribute to the development of ideas in the text? [RI.5]
