



Nine Doors

Vicki Grant

Reading level: 3.2

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AR Quiz # 130748

Book Summary

Emery's neighbor, Richard, is the kind of kid who gets under your skin. When Richard suggests a game of Nicky Nicky Nine Doors, Emery can't come up with a good excuse not to play. Using chocolate bars as "stunt poo," the boys start playing the classic prank of the burning bag on the doorstep, but this game has a modern twist. They videotape their neighbors' reactions. The naked guy and the man in the apron are highly entertaining, but Emery starts to get cold feet when another neighbor is reduced to tears. Emery wants out, but he's not sure how to stop the game without losing face. Soon the game gets serious, and Emery has a lot more to worry about than his reputation.

Author Biography

Vicki Grant is a bestselling and award-winning author of many books for juveniles and young adults, including *I.D.* and *Dead-End Job* in the Orca Soundings series and *Pigboy* in the Orca Currents series, all of which were YALSA Quick Picks. Vicki lives in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Connecting to the Text

Character

The words below are used in *Nine Doors* and are organized into two categories based on Emery's and Richard's experiences. Invite students to choose one of the following exercises, using vocabulary from the novel in their writing.

Pranks and Consequences

action	distance	footsteps	kidding	scarier
attempts	doorbell	hesitated	laughing	searching
bothered	embarrassed	hilarious	motioned	seriously
challenge	encouraged	impression	nervous	suddenly
comical	excited	insulting	pretend	surprised
cruel	excuse	interruption	reluctant	suspicious
dangerous	fooled	irritating	ridiculous	victim

Documentary Filmmaking

action!	documentary	human experience	process	stardom
camera	equipment	inspire	project	videotape
challenge	excitement	interview	scene	zeroed in
clear shot	famous	it's a wrap	script	zoom
creation	film	mike (microphone)	shooting	
critics	footage	popular	segment	

- Write a paragraph that summarizes Emery's experience playing Nicky Nicky Nine Doors. Compare how Emery felt about the game at the beginning to how he felt about it at the end. Do you think Emery will ever play again? How do you know?
- Write a paragraph that summarizes Richard's experience playing Nicky Nicky Nine Doors. Compare how Richard felt about the game at the beginning to how he felt about it at the end. Do you think Richard will ever play again? Why, or why not?
- Write the police report of the officer who found the kids in the garage. Explain what happened to Emery, Richard and Bebi, according to what they told you.
- You are a reporter on the nightly news. Write a news report about what happened to Emery, Richard and Bebi. Imagine you are "on the scene" in Marjorie's garage and the kids have just been found.
- Imagine that Emery must write Marjorie and the other neighbors an apology letter. Compose Emery's letter, explaining what happened and how Emery feels about it now.

- Richard and Emery got excited when they first thought of filming the pranks. Imagine you are either Richard or Emery and describe the experience of documenting the pranks. What was fun or exciting about it?
- Imagine you are Emery a year later and film has become a passion for you. Now, instead of filming pranks, you've found a subject matter that really interests you. Describe what you're doing now and the process you use when you're filming.

Plot

The following worksheet contains sentences from *Nine Doors*. Invite students to complete the sentences after reading each chapter. Based on what they know, can they guess the answers?

Answer Key:

Prologue	distance, weasel	Ch. 5	obvious, groceries
Ch. 1	subdivision	Ch. 5	lunging, snapping
Ch. 1	embarrassed, excited	Ch. 6	serious, dangerous, potentially
Ch. 2	videotape, afterward	Ch. 6	insane, supposed
Ch. 2	footage	Ch. 7	excitement, nervousness
Ch. 3	convinced, stardom	Ch. 7	immediately, doorbell
Ch. 3	brownest, scrunched	Ch. 8	terrified, realized, overpowered
Ch. 4	camera, neighborhood, possibility	Ch. 8	scared, breathing
Ch. 4	watching	Ch. 8	anxiety, panic
		Ch. 9	hospital, condition

Words to choose from:

hospital	convinced	excited	dangerous	realized
brownest	stardom	obvious	embarrassed	distance
camera	supposed	weasel	neighborhood	subdivision
watching	possibility	serious	condition	groceries
nervousness	scrunched	insane	doorbell	lunging
videotape	overpowered	excitement	breathing	footage
snapping	afterwards	immediately	terrified	scared
panic	anxiety	potentially		

Nine Doors by Vicki Grant

- Prologue I should have kept my _____. I knew I shouldn't have let him _____ his way into my brain.
- Ch. 1 The _____ was practically empty these days.
- Ch. 1 It's weird. I'd have been really _____ if any of my friends caught me playing something called Nicky Nicky Nine Doors, but right then, it didn't matter. I was actually starting to feel kind of _____.
- Ch. 2 We'll ring nine doors and _____ what happens. Then _____, we'll go back and explain that we're making a movie.
- Ch. 2 We just lost our PG-13 rating, but that didn't matter. It made for amazing _____.
- Ch. 3 Suddenly, I was _____ our movie was going to win an Oscar. I didn't want to miss my chance at _____.
- Ch. 3 She had the _____ eyes I'd ever seen. She _____ them up as if to say "What are you doing?"
- Ch. 4 Richard was looking through the _____. "I've scanned the whole _____. As far as I can tell, there's only one _____ at the moment."
- Ch. 4 "Hey, look!" he said. "I think the old lady's _____ us again."
- Ch. 5 It was pretty _____ she already had enough to handle with four tons of _____ and two maniac babies.
- Ch. 5 The dog was _____ and _____ at him as if it hadn't eaten in a month.
- Ch. 6 I was _____ about it now. I truly hated the game. It was mean, it was stupid, it was _____ and, worst of all, it was _____ embarrassing.
- Ch. 6 "My dad would go _____ if he caught me here. I'm not _____ to be alone with a boy."
- Ch. 7 I don't know if it was the _____ of having Bebi show up like that or _____ about having to talk to Richard, but something was making me feel sort of sick.
- Ch. 7 I couldn't see anyone. Not that I needed to see anyone. I knew _____ who must have rung my _____.
- Ch. 8 I was _____. I thrashed and thrashed until I _____ it wasn't working. I was _____.
- Ch. 8 Someone else was here—and they were just as _____ as I was. I could tell by their _____.
- Ch. 8 My _____ skyrocketed. I felt like a trapped animal. You were coming to get me! I was overcome by _____. I had no choice.
- Ch. 9 There's one more thing too. Would you mind driving me to the _____ on your way back? I think it's time I saw somebody about my _____.

Connecting to the Curriculum

Language Arts

Although the houses in Emery's subdivision seem ordinary, each one has a story, as Emery and Richard learn. As a creative-writing project, invite students to tell the story behind a home or dwelling that is unfamiliar to them. You may wish to present students with an assortment of pictures of various homes or dwellings.

Drama

Emery and Richard had a lot of fun putting their movies together. Both were excited in the planning and filming of their documentary. As a creative project, invite students to imagine activities they could film in a documentary style. If your class has access to a video camera, challenge students to create short documentary films, including planning, storyboarding, scriptwriting, interviewing and editing.

Health

Although Emery knows Marjorie is sick, he later learns that she has an anxiety disorder. Ask students to write a short report on anxiety disorders, answering at least three of the following:

- What portion of the population is affected by anxiety disorders?
- What can cause or contribute to anxiety disorders?
- What is agoraphobia?
- What is happening in the body during a panic attack?
- What are some ways to treat panic attacks?
- If someone in your class had a panic attack, to whom could they go for help?

Connecting to the Students—Ideas for Exploration

1. Emery said that he got into trouble not because he was stupid or mean but because he was bored. As a group, discuss Emery's theory.

(ch. 1) *"I know that's a dumb excuse, but I bet I'm not the first person to use it. My guess is boredom's the reason lots of people get into trouble. It can drive you nuts. It can make you do stuff you'd never do in a million years."*

- ◆ Brainstorm a list of three to five fun activities students could try when they're bored. Encourage students to think of activities that can be done in your class, at school, at home or in the community. Prompts could include: join a team or club, try a new hobby, read a book, visit the library, volunteer to help others, etc.
- ◆ With each idea, ask students, "How can we find out more about this?" and "What would be the first step for someone who wanted to try this?"
- ◆ Prepare a poster advertising the ideas. Hang the poster in a prominent place in the classroom and encourage students to try one idea. Then hold a follow-up discussion so students can share their experiences.

2. Emery and Richard got a kick out of playing pranks. Playing pranks can seem like fun but can quickly become hurtful or even dangerous, as Emery and Richard soon learn. As a group activity, introduce the idea of “paying it forward” as a fun and safe alternative to playing pranks. The idea behind paying it forward is to begin a succession of good deeds. If students don’t understand the term, illustrate with the following scenario: Student A gives Student B a comic book that is worth \$2. Student B attempts to pay for the comic book—“paying it back”—but Student A refuses the money; instead, Student A asks Student B to pay it forward through a good deed to another.
 - ◆ Organize a “pay it forward” campaign in your class. Encourage students to set a time frame for the campaign (for example, one week) and prepare posters or flyers to advertise the campaign.
 - ◆ Brainstorm ideas for good deeds, discussing what would be appropriate or inappropriate for your classroom or school.
 - ◆ During the campaign, ask students to keep a log with entries describing the experience. What good deeds did they try? Were they in response to something (*I opened the door for someone who was holding a lot of books*), or were they “spontaneous acts of kindness” (*she’ll never know it was me who cleaned the graffiti off her locker*)? Did their acts “make a difference”? Did they see a positive outcome? How did the experience feel?
3. Richard has a way of influencing Emery. Emery says:

(prologue) *“Richard makes you think things you don’t want to think, do things you don’t want to do. He’s always twisting stuff around in your head. It’s like he Photoshops reality right in front of you and you still get tricked into believing his version’s the real thing...I knew I should have kept my distance. I knew I shouldn’t have let him weasel his way into my brain.”*

 - ◆ Brainstorm strategies Emery could have used to keep his distance rather than engaging with Richard.
 - ◆ Ask students to work in pairs to prepare short skits, with each pair acting as Emery and Richard. Encourage students to use examples from the novel that demonstrate some of Richard’s teasing or taunting behaviors and appropriate responses Emery could have used.
 - ◆ Ask the class, “How could Emery have reacted differently?” Students may wish to create new scenarios outside of those from the novel. Encourage students to connect this activity to your school’s policies regarding bullying.

4. When Richard suggested playing Nicky Nicky Nine Doors, Emery said, “What could it hurt? If nothing else...it would kill some time” (ch. 1). Although playing pranks can seem like fun, there are many examples of pranks that ended tragically. Introduce this topic by considering the scene from *Nine Doors* where Richard decides to set fire to the “stunt poo.” Richard says, “Oh, come on...These are brick houses, cement steps, asphalt driveways. What could possibly catch on fire?” (ch. 2).
 - ♦ Ask students to reflect on examples that have occurred in your community or were seen in news media. A recent example occurred in Newmarket, UK, in February 2009, when a 15-year-old boy set fire to an entire school (he had intended only to set off the fire alarms). An online search will reveal many others.