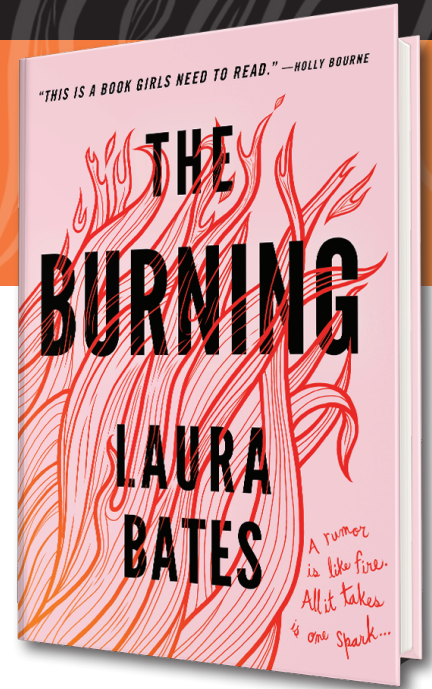


THE BURNING

BY LAURA BATES

READERS GUIDE



What happens when you can't run or hide from a mistake that goes viral? This powerful young adult novel by the founder of the Everyday Sexism Project is a necessary book every teen needs.

New school. *Check.*

New town. *Check.*

New last name. *Check.*

Social media profiles? *Deleted.*

There's nothing to trace Anna back to her old life. Nothing to link her to the incident. At least, that's what she thinks...until the whispers start up again.

As time begins to run out on her secrets, Anna finds herself irresistibly drawn to the tale of Maggie, a local woman accused of witchcraft centuries earlier. A woman whose story has terrifying parallels to Anna's own...

Topics covered: witch hunts, social media, bullying, sexting, friendship, & health and relationships

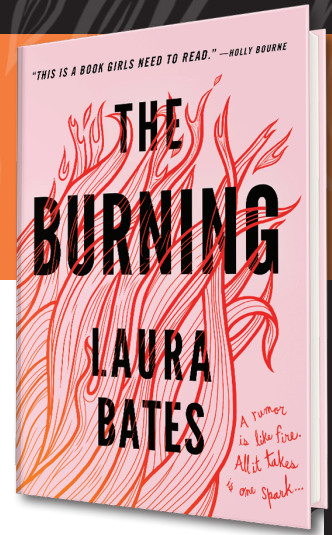
CHAPTER 1–6

- Compile a list of questions that the reader is left with after the first chapter.
- Find examples of how the narrator's new environment reflects her feelings.
- Why do you think they need a fresh start?
- Anna is the new girl: How do you think it would feel to move to a new place where you didn't know anyone? Why does Anna want to become invisible?
- Allusion: Why does the narrator make a reference to *The Wizard of Oz*?
- Foreshadowing to create suspense: What hints does the author give the reader to explain why Anna and her mom have traveled to St. Monans?
- What are your first impressions of the narrator, Anna? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.
- Explore her relationship with her mother. Does her relationship change as you progress through the novel?
- Find examples of vivid descriptions that help to create a picture of Anna's new surroundings. What literary techniques have been used? How effective are they? Why does the author compare Anna's new surroundings with where she used to live? What effect does this have for the reader?
- Is it possible to have a fresh start? Discuss.
- Why does Louise describe Anna as an enigma? Was this the right thing for Louise to do? How does this make Anna feel? What are your impressions of Louise? What are the implications of Louise's actions?

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CHAPTER 7–12

- How do you think Anna's friends in Birmingham feel now that she has gone? Do you think these feelings will change as they grow older/move away from school/find new friends?
- Should we judge someone without knowing them or the facts? Discuss.
- What starts to give Anna hope? Can you find any other signs of hope in the novel?
- How does the author create suspense throughout the chapters?
- How could Anna's new house be significant to the story from the past?
- Why does Anna feel both fear and fascination while in the attic? Write a sentence for each word showing the emotion of the character being displayed through their actions.
- What would the world be like with no phones or technology?
- What are the dangers of starting a rumor and gossiping about someone?

CHAPTER 13–24

- Why does the author use italics in chapter 13? How does the author show a new voice? How is it different? How does the author show that the voice is from the past?
- Do you agree that girls are like marshmallows? Should there be different rules for girls and boys?
- How has Anna's relationship with Cat and Alisha developed? Why and how does their relationship change? Why is friendship important?
- Alisha and Cat have a strong friendship despite being different. What do you think makes their relationship so strong?
- What should Anna do when the rumors start up again? Should she suffer in silence?
- What is the impact of bullying?
- Emily Winters tries to help Anna but doesn't want to be seen with her. Why?
- How do you think the girls were feeling after their conversation? How would you feel if no one would speak to you? How could Emily have acted differently?
- How is Robin portrayed in the text? Find examples to support your answer.
- Discuss the importance of words, both spoken and written, in everyday life. How can they be used in a positive and negative way? How and when can words be misinterpreted?

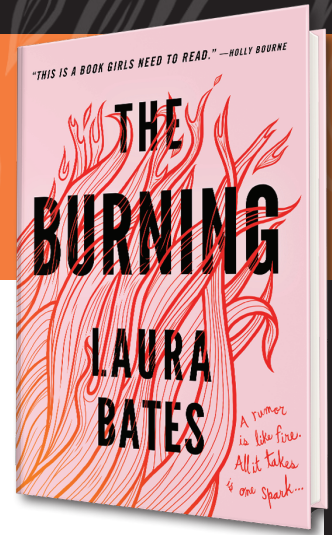
CHAPTER 25–40

- How does the story in the present day connect with the parallel story from the seventeenth century? What are the main similarities and differences between their experiences?
- Why has the author chosen to make parallels with a time in history engulfed in superstition and witchcraft?

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- Robin experiences homophobic bullying at school for supporting Anna. What pressures do young men face in modern society?
- Should Anna's mom have confided in Pat? Discuss the themes of friendship, loyalty, trust, betrayal, and forgiveness.
- If Anna's mom could do things differently, what do you think she would do?
- On page 293, Glenn states, "It's worth knowing that sometimes people see you as a symbol of something, instead of a person. And, when they do, it reflects on them, not on you." Discuss.
- On page 292, Glenn touches on faith: "Just because people believe different things, it doesn't necessarily mean somebody is right and somebody is wrong. They've just had different experiences. Who am I to say that something doesn't exist simply because it hasn't personally revealed itself to me?" Discuss.

CHAPTER 41—END

- Why does Headmaster Greaves react in a particular way to Anna's situation? Do you agree with his outlook? How does Anna's mom react to the headmaster's solution/decision? What do you think he should have done?
- How does the school fail Anna? Is there anything the teachers could have done differently to support Anna?
- Is it important to teach individuals the importance of taking responsibility for their own actions?
- Find examples in the text where different characters show bravery and strength in character.
- Does the past shape the present and future? Discuss.
- Do experiences change people? Discuss.
- Should our decisions and actions define us?
- How can you take action to change the future for the better?