

Grade 9 English Worksheet

Reading comprehension on a text by Mamphela Ramphele - "Steering by the Stars"

Read the text.

In the New Crossroads community, children are disciplined from a young age through encouragement and shaming, corporal punishment and, increasingly, by demands on children to perform domestic chores.

Shaming is a major tactic. As the child ages, shaming is coupled to physical punishment which, in extreme cases, can turn sadistic. In New Crossroads shaming was seen as drawing attention to an individual's weaknesses or vulnerability: *umntu ungumntu ngabanye abantu* – a person is a person through the connectedness to others. It also fostered interdependence in the community by openly recognising the individual's weaknesses, and yet still accepting them.

Families who used shaming argued that by drawing attention to the child's inadequacy or disability within a caring family relationship, the child would be less vulnerable to the vicious teasing they might face in the hostile outside world. However, shaming also meant that high performers are referred to disparagingly as 'bookworms' with a mixture of envy and pride in their extraordinary talents.

On many occasions during the project I was made aware of the lasting impact shaming seems to have on vulnerable adolescents. As victims of shaming at home, at school and in the wider community, they, in turn, use shaming and mockery with devastating effect on their peers. Shaming and mocking laughter were at the centre of many of the disputes I had to mediate during our weekends away. For example, I had earlier identified one of the youngsters as having visual problems. He was helped to acquire a pair of glasses.

This intervention was instructive. The teenager's school had not detected his visual problems, which we noticed immediately. The day hospital that was to get him free glasses would not see him after school. In the end a fieldworker had to accompany him through the bureaucratic maze. Then he faced being mocked mercilessly as Number-Four-Eyes [four-eyed person].

The depth of the wounds inflicted on the ego by shaming showed up time and again in some sensitive adolescents. Take Xola. At the age of fourteen he told me that he was still struggling to come to terms with some of the things that had been said to, and about, him.

Xola: The older boys and other older people used to laugh at me when I was beaten by my mother. They said that I was not her son but a child of baboons, which was why she beat me so much. I ended up wondering if they were right. I was worried about that for a long time.

from *Steering by the stars* by Mamphela Ramphele

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Answer the questions.

Part A: Comprehension

- 1 Name the different ways in which children are disciplined in New Crossroads. (4)
 - 2 Why was helping a youngster get a pair of glasses seen as “instructive” by the writer? What does it tell you about the school and hospital? (4)
 - 3 How does “shaming” increase tolerance by the community? (2)
 - 4 What did the victims of shaming later do to their friends? (2)
 - 5 According to the community, why did Xola’s mother beat him? (1)
 - 6 What was highlighted during the shaming that Xola was put through? (2)
 - 7 What is your opinion about shaming? Do you think it is an appropriate form of discipline? Give reasons for your answer. (5)
- (20)

Part B: Vocabulary

In your own words and in full sentences, explain the meanings of the words or phrases below:

- 8 bookworms (2)
 - 9 lasting impact (2)
 - 10 vulnerable adolescents (2)
 - 11 bureaucratic maze (2)
 - 12 mocked mercilessly (2)
 - 13 inflicted on the ego (2)
- (12)

Part C: Genre

- 14 Is the text fiction or non-fiction? Give reasons for your answer. (5)

Part D: Style

- 15 In a paragraph, describe the point of view of the writer on discipline. Give reasons for your answer. (5)

Part E: Thinking and reasoning

In your own words, define the following terms as they are used in the text:

- 16 shaming (2)
- 17 adolescent (2)
- 18 high performer (2)
- 19 ego (2)

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(8)

What evidence is given to support the following arguments in the text?

- 20 Shaming toughens a child. (2)
- 21 The hospital was not serving the community. (2)
- 22 The writer was more observant than the teachers at school. (2)
- (6)

Below are some generalisations. Give your own examples of these generalisations.

- 23 Shaming is cruel. (2)
- 24 Shaming affects people later in their lives. (2)
- (4)
- (18)

Part F: Active and passive voice

Rewrite the following sentences in the passive voice.

- 25 Shaming will highlight an individual's weakness. (2)
- 26 Bookworms will cause jealousy. (2)
- 27 Shaming will result in much unhappiness. (2)
- (6)

Rewrite the following sentences in the active voice.

- 28 Some children will be physically abused by their parents. (2)
- 29 Children who wear glasses may be teased by their peers. (2)
- 30 He will tell me if he was hurt. (2)
- (6)

Part G: Conditionals

Match the sentences.			
31	If children's opinions are respected	they should consult with them.	(1)
32	If children are shamed in public	teasing will have less effect on him.	(1)
33	If children are encouraged to do well	they will be embarrassed.	(1)
34	If schools want children to help decide on how they should be punished	they will learn to listen to other people's opinions.	(1)
35	If a child is comfortable with himself	they will try harder.	(1)
36	If families spend time together	they will be able to share their thoughts.	(1)
37	If the world was less obsessed with appearances	they will respect the person meting out the punishment.	(1)
38	If she had not been teased at school	she would not have shamed her own children.	(1)
39	If children are punished fairly	they would not have been concerned	(1)

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		by what the community said.	
40	If they had been comfortable with themselves	children would be more relaxed about their looks.	(1)
			(10)

Part H: Storytelling

Question 41

Do this exercise in groups.

If there are learners who speak your home language, then do this exercise with them.

Method

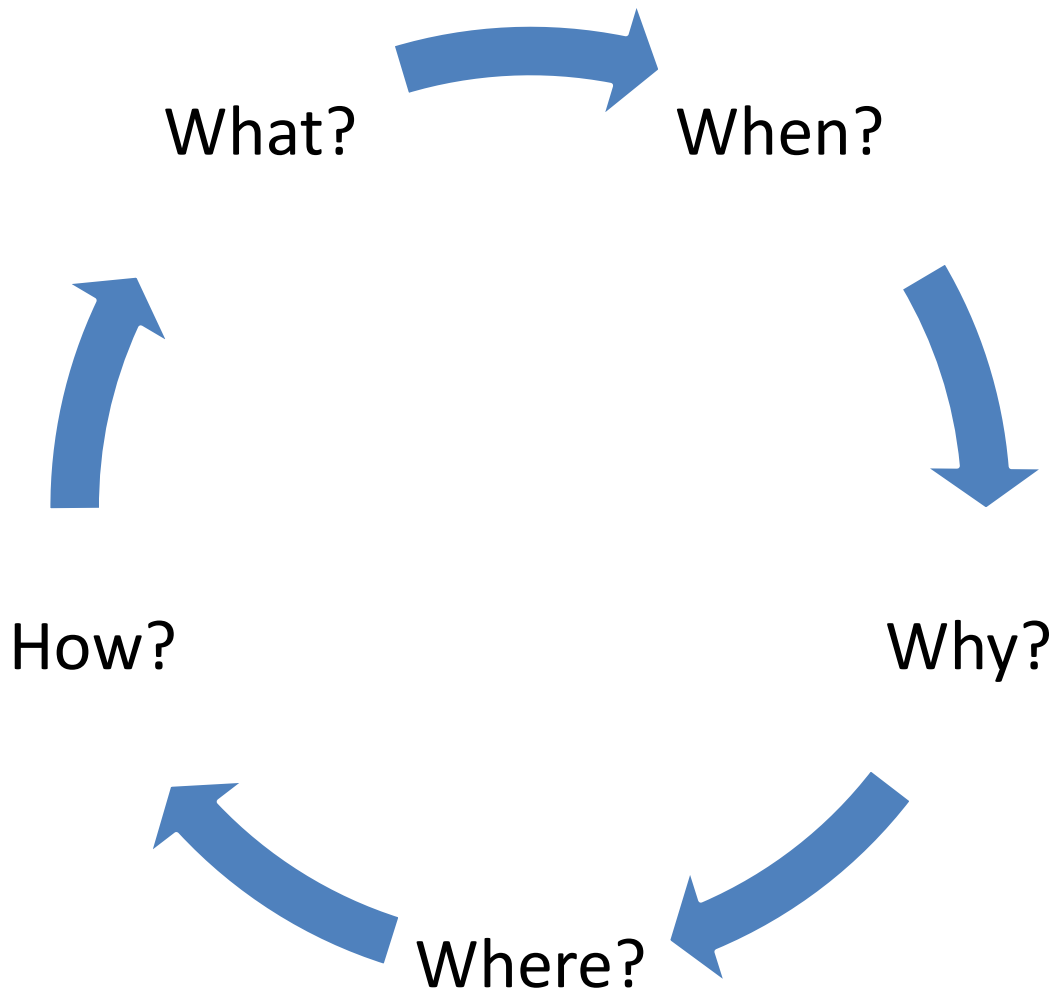
- Think of a story about being disciplined by someone.
- Make some notes on your story. Use a flow diagram as shown.
- Tell your stories in your home language.
- Discuss your stories. Ask one another questions about the stories.
- Translate the stories into English.
- Discuss the translation of idiomatic language with the group. Is it possible to translate idiomatic language?

Flow diagram

In your diagram you must explain:

- When you were disciplined. How old were you?
- Why you were disciplined. What did you do?
- Where you were disciplined.
- How you were disciplined. What was done to you?
- What you learnt, if anything?

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Suggested Solutions

Part A: Comprehension

1	Children are disciplined through encouragement, shaming, and corporal punishment and by making them perform domestic chores.	(4)
2	The school was careless. It had not even noticed that the boy had a visual impairment / was having difficulty seeing / had poor eyesight. The hospital was disinterested and uncaring, not even bothering to allow children to come for appointments in the afternoons, which would have been better for them and allowed them to attend school in the mornings. Instead, children had to go to the hospital in the morning and miss school.	(4)
3	Shaming recognises an individual's weakness while accepting him/her. It accepts difference or weakness by highlighting it within the community.	(2)
4	The victims of shaming used shaming in turn on their peers.	(2)
5	He was said to look like a baboon.	(1)
6	Xola's baboon-like looks were highlighted during shaming.	(2)
7	Learners should express any opinion on shaming. They should be able to explain their opinion in a clear and informative way.	(5)
		(20)

Part B: Vocabulary

8	Children were critical of bookworms. They saw them as nerds. While they were jealous of them they were also proud of them.	(2)
9	This is the permanent result of shaming. It is the lasting effect that stays with the child after the teasing is over. It influences the child for a long time.	(2)
10	These are weak, young and susceptible teenagers who can be hurt easily. They are not fully grown and are sensitive to criticism.	(2)
11	It is a mess / confusion of red tape, filling in of forms and meeting of requirements by government officials. This bureaucracy is often seen as unnecessary and gets in the way of service delivery. A maze is a path which has been deliberately created to lose the user / mislead the user. Government officials are seen as obstructive, deliberately making it difficult for people to access services.	(2)
12	This refers to being teased without pity. Children are seen as being cruel and heartless as they continuously make fun of those who are weaker than them.	(2)
13	This is damage that is pushed or forced onto the personality of a child. The self-image of the child is undermined.	(2)
		(12)

Part C: Genre

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14	<p>The text is a piece of non-fiction. It describes what happens in a real place, namely New Crossroads.</p> <p>It is a report of a study of children. This is shown by the use of “I” as the person observing the behaviour of the children.</p> <p>It uses the names of people, but these may have been changed to protect them. It discusses a real issue, i.e. how children are disciplined.</p> <p>It specifically discusses shaming as a form of discipline and suggests how this is used and expresses an opinion on its use.</p>	(5)
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Part D: Style

15	<p>The writer suggests that shaming can turn “sadistic”.</p> <p>The writer indicates that she has spoken to families and that they argue for shaming, but then goes on to offer an alternative point of view, beginning with “however” and pointing out that shaming includes disparaging references. She uses the first person “I” and gives examples of the “lasting impact” of shaming on adolescents she refers to as “vulnerable”. She calls them “victims of shaming” and this word points to the fact that she thinks that they are being victimised, teased and abused by someone stronger than them.</p> <p>She uses the synonym “mockery” for shaming. This shows that she thinks that shaming is cruel.</p> <p>She sees shaming leading to “disputes”.</p>	(5)
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Part E: Thinking and reasoning

16	Shaming is when parents or older people “tease” a child about a characteristic. They expose a weakness by drawing attention to it. They attack where the child is most defenceless, open to being hurt.	(2)
17	An adolescent is a young person, generally a teenager between the ages of 12 and 17 or 18. An adolescent is not yet an adult. He/she is still growing physically and emotionally.	(2)
18	A high performer, in the context of the text, is referred to as a bookworm, thus highlighting his/her intellectual ability. He/she is a good student and performs well at school.	(2)
19	Ego refers to a person’s feeling about him-/herself. It refers to the person’s self-esteem or image. It could be described as the picture one has of oneself.	(2)
		(8)
20	Children who have been shamed are less vulnerable to the vicious teasing they may face in the outside world. / Shaming makes a child tougher and thus more able to face the world.	(2)
21	Children could only be helped during the morning in the time when they should	(2)

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	have been attending school.	
22	The writer noticed that a youngster needed glasses, but the teachers did not.	(2)
		(6)

23	The learner should give an example of how shaming is cruel.	(2)
24	The learner should give an example of how shaming affects people later in their lives.	(2)
		(4)
		(18)

Part F: Active and passive voice

25	An individual's weakness will be highlighted by shaming.	(2)
26	Jealousy will be caused by bookworms.	(2)
27	Much unhappiness will be the result of shaming.	(2)
		(6)

28	Their parents will physically abuse some children.	(2)
29	Their peers may tease children who wear glasses.	(2)
30	I will be told (by him) if he was hurt.	(2)
		(6)

Part G: Conditionals

	Match the sentences.		
31	If children's opinions are respected	they will learn to listen to other people's opinions.	(1)
32	If children are shamed in public	they will be embarrassed.	(1)
33	If children are encouraged to do well	they will try harder.	(1)
34	If schools want children to help decide on how they should be punished	they should consult with them.	(1)
35	If a child is comfortable with himself	teasing will have less effect on him.	(1)
36	If families spend time together	they will be able to share their thoughts.	(1)
37	If the world was less obsessed with appearances.	children would be more relaxed about their looks.	(1)
38	If she had not been teased at school	she would not have shamed her own children.	(1)
39	If children are punished fairly	they will respect the person meting out the punishment.	(1)
40	If they had been comfortable with themselves	they would not have been concerned by what the community said.	(1)
			(10)

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Part H: Storytelling

Question 41

Learners should work in groups.

If there are learners who speak the same home language, then they should do this exercise together.

They should follow the method outlined