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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2005 Volume III: War and Civil Liberties

Biblioclasm: The Organized Destruction of Books

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This unit explores one way in which people who are trying to control or eliminate another people will destroy their books. In William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, Calaban urges Trinculo and Stefano to kill Prospero and burn the library. Calaban says; "take away his books first for without them he is sot." We will look at how the "first target of the tyrant is the library." A look back in history will prove this point. From an examination of fire, to the symbolism of the book, to the fiery destruction of books, students will discover the value of the written word. The unit will show that burning books is the physical incarnation of censorship and often even genocide. They are part of seemingly incessant efforts to destroy and censor information that rightly is freely available to every human.

(Developed for Language Arts, grade 9; recommended for English and Language Arts, grades 9-12)

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