Adapted from **Books as Art Objects (Reading Is Optional)**Michael Frank, January 2nd, 2004 (source: https://www.nytimes.com/ [)](https://www.theguardian.com/)

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| 1    5     10     15  20     25     30 | ''Ninety From the Nineties: A Decade of Printing'' is an exhibition built around a conundrum that lies at the center of most surveys of the book as object. The tension centers on purpose: books, which we are accustomed to thinking of as containers -- and conveyors -- of information, are placed in a context in which form is valued over content. Language is less important than the type that impresses it on the page. The paper counts for more than the story told on it. The illustrations and the binding might be the story. Words? Who needs 'em?  Virginia Bartow has put together this exhibition held at the New York Public Library. Asked what drove her to chose 90 out of the 4,000 letterpress books the library acquired in the decade in which they were made, she replied with a question : ''Can books, without much explanation, without being read even, say something?''  The library has a policy of buying books made by American and European presses that follow in the tradition of the private-press movement, set in motion by William Morris and the Kelmscott Press in London at the end of the 19th century.  In an increasingly industrialized world, Morris's goal was to reintroduce dedicated craftsmanship into the printing and binding of books. Using fine paper, typefaces based on calligraphic letter forms, decorative illustrations and aesthetic bindings, Morris sought to ''recapture the beauty and harmony of an earlier age,'' as Ms. Bartow puts it in her pamphlet accompanying the show. What is surprising, is the imaginative energy that is freed by this simple constraint. A number of books seem perfunctorily chosen, perhaps because their task is to fill out the exhibition's five sections: ''Binding,'' ''Type,'' ''Paper,'' ''Illustration'' and ''Inspiration.''  The urge among these printers to play with their materials and methods, the structure and illustration of their books, is palpable. At times it forces the basic question: What is a book, anyway? |

I. *Introduce the document.*

II. *Here are some verbs. Can you find their equivalents in the text?*   
a. to focus on something b. to matter c. to gather   
d. to try to do something e. to liberate f. to demand

III. *Here are some definitions. Find in the article the expressions they refer to.*   
  
a. A confusing and difficult problem or question   
b. To become familiar through frequent or regular repetition   
c. The process by which many copies of a book are produced by repeated direct impression of an inked, raised surface against sheets or a continuous roll of paper.   
d. The quality of design and work shown in something made by hand; artistry.

IV. *Complete the blanks with a suitable preposition each time.*   
  
a. The exhibition centers \_ \_ \_ \_ extraordinary books.   
b. He selected three pictures \_ \_ \_ \_ the 90 illustrations available on the site.  
c. This tradition was set \_ \_ \_ \_ motion by Morris and Kelmscott.   
d. They intended to reintroduce craftsmanship \_ \_ \_ \_ the printing industry

V. *For each of the words listed lines 28-29, find at least 4 other words that belong to the same lexical field.*

VII. *Say if the following statements are* ***correct*** *or* ***false****. Justify your answer in your own words or by quoting from the text.*   
  
a. ''Ninety From the Nineties: A Decade of Printing'' is the name of the exhibition.   
b. Each book has been carefully chosen because its content is meaningful.   
c. On an average, Virginia Bartow’s library acquired 400 books a year.   
d. William Morris’s main concern was to rationalize the mass production of printed books.

*VI. Answer the following questions in complete sentences.*

a. How many sections are there in the exhibition put together by Virginia Bartow? What does each section represent?   
b. Can you list all the characteristics of a private-press book?   
c. What exactly is the constraint mentioned line 25? Why can it be considered paradoxical?   
d. What do the 90 books chosen by Virginia Bartow have in common?

***VII. Written expression***  
  
Choose one of the two questions (l. 12-13 or l. 33) in italics and answer it (180 words)