Directions: Read the text below titled “Herd Behavior” and complete the three tasks.

As you read, you will be focusing on the theme of Social Pressure as it relates to the text.

Essential Question: "Why do people follow the crowd?"

“Herd behavior” is a term used to describe how individuals change when they are part of a crowd. As you read, take notes on the causes of herd behavior.

Note: Each task will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. You may complete the tasks all at once or over the course of three days.

Background

The term “herd behavior” comes from the behavior of animals in herds, particularly when they are in a dangerous situation such as escaping a predator. All of the animals stay close together in a group and, in panic mode form a larger group. It is very unusual for a member of the herd to stray from the herd when moving.

The term also applies to human behavior, and it usually describes large numbers of people acting the same way at the same time. It often has a connotation of irrationality (not thinking normally), as people’s actions are driven by emotion rather than by thinking through a situation. Human herd behavior can be observed at large-scale demonstrations, riots, strikes, religious gatherings, sports events, and outbreaks of mob violence. When herd behavior sets in, an individual person’s judgment and opinion-forming process shuts down as he or she automatically follows the group’s movement and behavior.

Examples of Herd Behavior

Herd behavior in humans is frequently observed at times of danger and panic; for example, a fire in a building often causes herd behavior, with people often not going by their individual reasoning/thinking and fleeing together in a pack following everyone else. People in a crisis that requires escape will attempt to move faster than normal, copy the actions of others, interact physically fighting with each other, and ignore alternative strategies such as finding other ways out and follow the crowd.

Another common example of human herd behavior are stock market bubbles. Stock market bubbles are large stock market trends that often begin and end with a mass frenzy of buying (bubbles) or selling (crashes). Many observers see these stock market trends as examples of herding behavior because individuals are driven by emotion rather than reason to “join the crowd”; greed drives mass buying frenzies, and fear drives crashes.

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Behavior in Crowds

[5] A more common example of human herd behavior occurs/happens in dense or large public crowds or mobs. Crowds that gather because of a grievance (wrongdoing) or protest can involve herding behavior that becomes violent. Psychologists posit or assume by fact that a “group mind” can overtake a mob and embolden or give courage to people and to act in ways they would not individually, increasing the likelihood that situations become violent.

Sporting events can also create herd behavior on a violent scale. The football hooliganism or violent behavior in Europe in the 1980s is a well-known example of sports-related herding behavior and violence. Overzealous or over excited fans of football teams often engaged in unruly or destructive behavior in the name of supporting their team and intimidating the rival team, to the extent that people involved could be badly injured or even killed.

Some historians believe that Adolf Hitler purposefully took advantage of herd behavior psychology by planting a significant number of undercover German officers in the crowds at his speeches. These officers would enthusiastically or passionately cheer for Hitler, and the rest of the crowd followed them, making it seem as if the entire crowd supported Hitler. These speeches would then be broadcast to a larger public audience, magnifying the effect.

Everyday Decision-Making

Herd behavior does not always have such harmful effects; it can be influential in people’s everyday, simple decisions. For example, suppose that a family is walking down the street looking for a restaurant to have dinner. If they pass a restaurant that is empty and one that is relatively crowded with people, they are far more likely to choose the crowded one, on the thought that it’s better because there are more people there. Herding can be subtle or small in this way; it simply involves people’s tendency or need to follow a crowd rather than carve out an individual path in many situations.

Task 1: Complete the EBSR/Comprehension questions. Be sure to read each response carefully and choose the best answer.

1. PART A: Which of the following best summarizes the central idea of the text?

   A. Even when acting alone, humans are not as advanced as we would like to think.
   B. Herd behavior suggests that there are limits to human beings’ free will.
   C. The actions of a large group can greatly influence an individual’s decisions.
   D. Crowds always become violent and chaotic when individuals begin to panic.
2. **PART B:** Which of the following quotes best supports the answer to Part A?

A. “All of the animals band closely together in a group and, in panic mode, move together as a unit” (Paragraph 1)
B. “When herd behavior sets in, an individual person’s judgment and opinion-forming process shut down” (Paragraph 2)
C. “Herd behavior in humans is frequently observed at times of danger and panic; for example, a fire in a building” (Paragraph 3)
D. “suppose that a family is walking down the street looking for a restaurant to have dinner” (Paragraph 8)

3. **Which statement best describes the relationship between the stock market and herd behavior?**

A. Stock market employees work in a constant state of anxiety, much like herding animals.
B. Herd behavior contributes to stock market surges and crashes because it compels stockbrokers to act on emotion rather than reason.
C. Both herd behavior and the stock market are motivated mainly by greed, which prevents people from using logic and reason.
D. Stock market bubbles and crashes are sometimes caused by herd behavior but are most often caused by fear.

4. **Why does the author likely include the final section titled “Everyday Decision-Making” in the article?**

A. to show how not every case of herd behavior is necessarily negative or violent
B. to show that herd behavior also occurs in smaller groups
C. to demonstrate how herd behavior allows individuals to avoid risks
D. to acknowledge that herd behavior is a problem that everyone faces

**Task 2:** Personal Connections. Think of a real-life example you have seen of herd behavior. What do you think caused the people in your example to think or act as a group? Do you remember seeing anyone who chose to do something different from the rest of the group? Be sure to answer in complete sentences.

**Example:** I remember during one of my psychology classes my teacher yelled “fire” the entire class went for the front door of our classroom ignoring the back door. My teacher used this as
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