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bur·den  (bûr dn)

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n.

1. Something that is carried.

2.

a. Something that is emotionally difficult to bear.

b. A source of great worry or stress; weight: *The burden of economic sacrifice rests on the workers of the plant.*

3. A responsibility or duty: *The burden of organizing the campaign fell to me.*

4. A principal or recurring idea; a theme: *"The burden of what he said was to defend enthusiastically the conservative aristocracy" (J.A. Froude).*

5. *Music*

a. A drone, as of a bagpipe or pedal point.

b. *Archaic* The chorus or refrain of a composition.

c. *Archaic* The bass accompaniment to a song.

6. *Nautical*

a. The amount of cargo that a vessel can carry.

b. The weight of the cargo carried by a vessel at one time.

7. The amount of a disease-causing entity present in an organism.

tr.v. **bur·dened**, **bur·den·ing**, **bur·dens**

1. To cause difficulty or distress to; distress or oppress.

2. To load or overload.

[Middle English, from Old English *byrthen*; see **bher-**¹ [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#). Noun, senses 4 and 5, influenced by [BOURDON](#).]

Synonyms: burden, affliction, albatross, cross, millstone, trial, tribulation

These nouns denote something onerous or troublesome: *the burden of a guilty conscience; considered the television an affliction that destroyed the spirit of community; a poorly built home that became his albatross; an unhappy marriage that became a cross to bear; a routine duty that turned into a millstone; a troublemaker who is a trial to the teacher; suffered many tribulations in rising from poverty.* See Also Synonyms at [substance](#).

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Indo-European & Semitic Roots Appendices

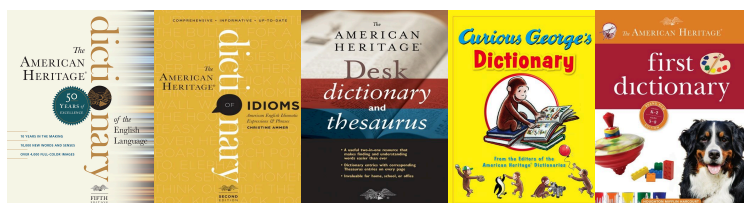
Thousands of entries in the dictionary include etymologies that trace their origins back to reconstructed proto-languages. You can obtain more information about these forms in our online appendices:

[Indo-European Roots](#)

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The Indo-European appendix covers nearly half of the Indo-European roots that have left their mark on English words. A more complete treatment of Indo-European roots and the English words derived from them is available in our [Dictionary of Indo-European Roots](#).

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