



# 2010-11 HOT Season for Young People Teacher Guidebook

## To Kill a Mockingbird

Tennessee Repertory  
Theatre



PHOTO BY HARRY BUTLER



Tennessee Performing Arts Center



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# Dear Teachers,

*Harper Lee's Pulitzer Prize winning novel, To Kill a Mockingbird, celebrates its 50th Anniversary this year, and TPAC Education is thrilled to bring you the Tennessee Repertory Theatre's production of this classic. The unedited stage adaptation includes all the humor, turmoil, and tragedy from the book in two and a half hours, including an intermission.*

*Set in 1935, To Kill a Mockingbird shows the blind and violent hatred of the times through the eyes of Scout Finch as she learns to fight for what is right, no matter the cost. The powerful themes of racial prejudice, loss of innocence, and courage allow students to make connections to their own lives and personal experiences.*

*We hope you and your students will enjoy and connect with this masterful work of art.*

## **TPAC Education**

**\*\*Teacher Note:** Please note that the language from the book has not been edited. This performance will contain strong language and racial epithet.

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One area that we are strongly committed to is the education of our students. We are proud to support TPAC's Humanities Outreach in Tennessee Program. What an important sponsorship this is – reaching over 25,000 students and teachers – some students would never see a performing arts production without this program. Regions continues to reinforce its commitment to the communities it serves and in addition to supporting programs such as HOT, we have close to 200 associates teaching financial literacy in classrooms this year.

**Thank you, teachers,** for giving your students this wonderful opportunity. They will certainly enjoy the experience. You are creating memories of a lifetime, and Regions is proud to be able to help make this opportunity possible.



Jim Schmitz  
Executive Vice President  
Area Executive  
Middle Tennessee Area

# Key Points about To Kill a Mockingbird

**Full Title** · *To Kill a Mockingbird*

**Author** · Harper Lee

**Genre** · Coming-of-age story; social drama; courtroom drama; Southern drama

**Date of first publication** · 1960

**Narrator** · Scout narrates the story herself, looking back in retrospect an unspecified number of years after the events of the novel take place.

**Point of View** · Scout narrates in the first person, telling what she saw and heard at the time and augmenting this narration with thoughts and assessments of her experiences in retrospect. Although she is by no means an omniscient narrator, she has matured considerably over the intervening years and often implicitly and humorously comments on the naïveté she displayed in her thoughts and actions as a young girl. Scout mostly tells of her own thoughts but also devotes considerable time to recounting and analyzing Jem's thoughts and actions.

**Tone** · Childlike, nostalgic, innocent; as the novel progresses, increasingly dark, foreboding, and critical of society

**Tense** · Past

**Setting** · 1933–1935 in the fictional town of Maycomb, Alabama

**Major Conflict** · The childhood innocence with which Scout and Jem begin the novel is threatened by numerous incidents that expose the evil side of human nature, most notably the guilty verdict in Tom Robinson's trial and the vengefulness of Bob Ewell. As the novel progresses, Scout and Jem struggle to maintain faith in the human capacity for good in light of these recurring instances of human evil.

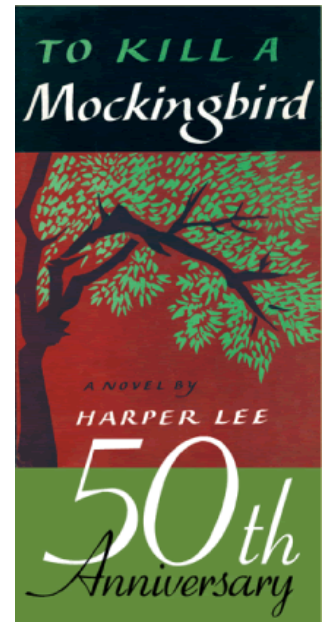
**Rising Action** · Scout, Jem, and Dill become fascinated with their mysterious neighbor Boo Radley and have an escalating series of encounters with him. Meanwhile, Atticus is assigned to defend a black man, Tom Robinson against the supposed rape charges Bob Ewell has brought against him. Watching the trial, Scout, and especially Jem, cannot understand how a jury could possibly convict Tom Robinson based on the Ewells' clearly fabricated story.

**Climax** · Despite Atticus's capable and impassioned defense, the jury finds Tom Robinson guilty. The verdict forces Scout and Jem to confront the fact that the morals Atticus taught them cannot always be reconciled with the reality of the world and the evils of human nature.

**Falling Action** · When word spreads that Tom Robinson has been shot while trying to escape from prison, Jem struggles to come to terms with the injustice of the trial and of Tom Robinson's fate. After making a variety of threats against Atticus and others connected with the trial, Bob Ewell assaults Scout and Jem as they walk home one night, but Boo Radley saves the children and fatally stabs Ewell. The sheriff, knowing that Boo, like Tom Robinson, would be misunderstood and likely convicted in a trial, protects Boo by saying that Ewell tripped and fell on his own knife. After sitting and talking with Scout briefly, Boo retreats into his house, and Scout never sees him again.

SparkNotes Editors. "SparkNote on To Kill a Mockingbird." SparkNotes.com. SparkNotes LLC. 2002. Web. 21 Jun. 2010.

**Stage Adaptation** · Full-length play written by Christopher Sergel, published by The Dramatic Publishing Company. This stage version of Harper Lee's beloved novel is described as the best sentiments of the novel in a two-hour story, capturing the humor and pathos of the book, while offering opportunities for theatricality in the performance.



# From the Director: Tennessee Repertory Theatre



Dear Teachers,

*Doing a stage adaptation of a work of literature is always a challenge, but when the source material is one of the most beautiful, influential novels of the last fifty years, the challenge is entirely daunting. One approaches TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD with some hesitation if one loves the book with a passion, as I do. How is it possible for anything on the stage to do the book justice? The book is so rich, the imagery so complex and poetic, the narrative voice so strong—how can that be distilled and formatted to the necessary shape of a play, which must be leaner and more direct?*

*There are wonderful books that should no doubt never be made into a play—too much would not translate. Fortunately, TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD is not one of those books, and the reason is simple. Harper Lee tells her story like an old-fashioned storyteller—with vivid scene descriptions and brilliant dialogue spoken by whole and compelling characters. This is the heart of theatre as well. Many conversations as well as the trial of Tom Robinson almost in its entirety, can be lifted virtually unchanged from the book and placed on the stage. As I started to work on this project, I was delighted to learn that the “how” is made possible by the natural drama of Lee’s storytelling style. This is also evident when you watch the award-winning movie adaptation, with the screenplay by one of America’s best playwrights, Horton Foote. In the screenplay, time is condensed and characters are consolidated or eliminated altogether. The plot focuses on the core of the book, intertwining the trial of Tom Robinson, the fascination with Boo Radley, and Atticus at the center. And it works beautifully. The stage adaptation takes its cue from the screenplay, particularly with regards to time, characters and trimming of plot. And, like the screenplay, the stage adaptation is rich with Lee’s dialogue from the book, dialogue which was unerring in capturing the cadence of the speech of the time and place, and her wit sparkles throughout.*

*Of course, another important question might be “Why bother?” -- Why bother to put Lee’s story on the stage if we can’t have Aunt Alexandra or Uncle Jack, and we don’t get to watch Scout battle it out with her first teacher, or go to Finch’s Landing for Christmas, or visit Mrs. Dubose’s scary house with Jem to read to her? My answer is that the core of the story, the story about justice and human dignity and Atticus’ battle on their behalf, is one that theatre is uniquely suited to tell. Theatre, by its nature, teaches us to be human through its ability to inspire EMPATHY. The ability to feel empathy is what leads us to make ethical choices. An audience sitting together in a room, moved as one to feel empathy for Tom, is going to, as a group, come to feel the agony of such injustice. The power of Lee’s story as communicated by living actors is magnified and heightened as it reverberates through a living audience, and as a community we feel together that Boo Radley is deserving of our respect even though he’s different from us, or that Atticus is the kind of person we want to be. This is a worthy enhancement to the experience of the book in my opinion, and while it in no way replaces the experience of reading the book, it can excite a feeling of shared response to the core values of the book, and in that shared response we are led to make ethical choices as a community.*

*If experiencing communal imagination and empathy in a theatre excites even one person to read TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD with a relish they were not able to conjure on their own, then as a theatre artist I will feel that in our own small unique way, we have served this magnificent book.*

*Rene Copeland, Producing Artistic Director*

## **About the Company**

Since 1985, Tennessee Repertory Theatre has been a critically acclaimed regional theatre, creating high quality professional productions and by serving as a prime cultural, educational, and economic resource within the Nashville and Middle Tennessee communities. Tennessee Rep produces work that is designed, built, and rehearsed in Nashville by highly skilled actors, designers, directors, and technicians. A non-profit organization, Tennessee Rep is committed to consistently delivering thought-provoking theatre each year.

## About the Author: Harper Lee

Nelle Harper Lee was born on April 28, 1926, to Amasa Coleman Lee and Frances Cunningham Finch Lee. Harper Lee grew up in the small southwestern Alabama town of Monroeville. Her father, a former newspaper editor and proprietor, was a lawyer who also served on the state legislature.

Many details of *To Kill a Mockingbird* parallel Harper Lee's own life. Like Lee, Scout is the daughter of a respected small-town Alabama attorney, and Scout's friend Dill was inspired by Lee's childhood friend and neighbor, Truman Capote. In 1931, Lee was the same age when the first trials began in the small Alabama town of Scottsboro as Scout at the start of Tom Robinson's trial. During the Scottsboro trials, the nine defendants were accused of raping two white women and were not provided with the services of a lawyer until the first day of trial. Despite medical testimony and no evidence, the all-white jury found the men guilty of the crime and sentenced all but the youngest to death. The Scottsboro case left a deep impression on the young Lee, who would use it later as the rough basis for the events in *To Kill a Mockingbird*.



Lee completed *To Kill a Mockingbird* in the summer of 1959. Published July 11, 1960, it was an immediate bestseller and won great critical acclaim, including the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1961. It remains a bestseller with more than 30 million copies in print. In 1999, it was voted "Best Novel of the Century" in a poll by the Library Journal.



### **Harper Lee on her book:**

*"It is and it isn't autobiographical. For instance, there is not an incident in it that is factual. The trial, and the rape charge that brings on the trial, are made up out of a composite of such cases and charges...What I did present as exactly as I could were the clime and tone, as I remember them, of the town in which I lived. From childhood on, I did sit in the courtroom watching my father argue cases and talk to juries."* -- *New York Herald Tribune*, 1962

Image: Harper Lee in the courthouse of Monroeville, Alabama. This courthouse was the setting for the movie version of her book.

## About the Time Period

Set in a small Alabama town during the Great Depression, *To Kill a Mockingbird* is an example of historical fiction. When reading historical fiction, it's helpful to know about the real setting and time period.

In her novel, Harper Lee strives to illustrate the racial climate of the South in the 1930s, a time when Jim Crow was the law of the land, racial segregation was deep-rooted, and mob rule unshakable.

In *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Harper Lee makes many connections to real events of the time period that she was writing about. African American history during the Jim Crow era includes encounters with poverty, racism, disrespect, and protest. Lee develops all four of these themes in her novel. The trial of Tom Robinson is directly related to the real life trials of the 9 Scottsboro boys in the 1930s. Both of these trials focus around the same circumstances, the rape of a white woman by black men. This novel is a study of American people and attitudes in the 1930's, and through Scout's eyes, the reader encounters a world where people are judged by their race, and justice does not always prevail.

# Researching the Time Period: Create a Timeline and Collage

To prepare for reading this novel, it's helpful to know about the real setting and time period. Looking at the emotions and conflicts of the time provides a greater understanding of the story.

## Create a Timeline

Historical fiction is an ideal tool for learning about life in different eras. Literature transports students back in history, provides insight into the lives of people and events in time, and motivates students to want to learn more. Use a wall of your classroom to create a timeline of the era that includes the following elements:

- \* important events in the novel and the years they occurred within the plot chronology
- \* actual events for the same time period from researching the Depression and the 1930's

*(Helpful Hint: Look for historical references in the novel that can help you determine what year events occur. For example, in the first chapter of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Scout recalls that "Maycomb County had recently been told it had nothing to fear but fear itself," a famous phrase from Franklin D. Roosevelt's first Inaugural address in 1933. This historical reference tells readers that the novel begins soon after FDR's 1933 Inauguration, which places the climax of the book around 1936. Use this reference as a starting place to figure out the plot chronology and to determine in which years the events in the novel take place.)*

After creating the timeline, discuss some of these questions:

- What did students learn about the era/history that they did not know before reading the book?
- What parallel from historical events and the novel surprised you?
- How do the real-life historical events affect the meaning of the story for you?
- Are you inspired to learn more about any of these events or people?

## Time Period Photo-Collage Activity

A collage is a collection of pictures which represents the creator's mental images on a theme or topic. In this activity, students will create a collage to depict the way they imagine, or visualize, scenes from *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Using the American Memory website, students will select photos from federal archives as the pictures for a collage.

Choose Depression-era photos from the state of Alabama, the setting of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, then print out those which seem to illustrate parts of the novel to you.

**Instructions:**

- 1) Select 6 photographs which illustrate part of the setting of *To Kill a Mockingbird*.
- 2) Create a caption to describe each photo.
- 3) Select and include an excerpt or quote from the novel to explain the photos and captions.
- 4) Compile your photos, captions, and quotations to construct a collage.
- 5) Present your collage to a small group or to the class, explaining your choices.

**Example:**



Image from the American Memory website, as noted above.

The following web address will take you directly to images of America from the Great Depression to World War II, 1935-1945, with pictures specifically from Alabama - [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/fsaall:@FILREQ\(@field\(SUBJ+@band\(Alabama--Childersburg+\)\)+@FIELD\(COLLID+fsa\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/fsaall:@FILREQ(@field(SUBJ+@band(Alabama--Childersburg+))+@FIELD(COLLID+fsa)))

Caption: Street scene of downtown Maycomb  
Quote from the novel: "People moved slowly then. They ambled across the square, shuffled in and out of the stores around it, took their time about everything."

# Scottsboro Boys Trial



No crime in American history produced as many trials, convictions, reversals, and retrials as the alleged gang rape of two white girls, Victoria Price and Ruby Bates, by nine black teenagers on a Southern Railroad on March 25, 1931.

Trials of the “Scottsboro Boys” began only twelve days after their arrest. In just three days' time, eight of the nine boys, all under 21 - four of them under 18 and two of them sixteen or under - were pushed through trials and sentenced to death without even the chance to communicate with their parents.

The cases were appealed to the United States Supreme Court which overturned the convictions in the landmark case of *Powell vs. Alabama*. The Court ruled that the right of the defendants under the Fourteenth Amendment to competent legal counsel had been denied by Alabama. The boys would have to go through new trials.

The second round of trials began with Haywood Patterson on March 30, 1933, in the courtroom of Judge James Horton. During this trial, one of the accusers, Ruby Bates, admitted to perjury. Under direct examination, Bates said a troubled conscience and the advice of a New York minister prompted her to return to Alabama and tell the truth about what happened. Bates said that there was no rape, none of the defendants touched her or even spoke to her, and the accusations of rape were made after Victoria Price told her “to frame up a story.”

At one o'clock on April 8, 1933, the jury was sent out to deliberate. The jury pronounced Haywood Patterson guilty and sentenced him to death. The decision on guilt took only five minutes. The testimony of Bates wasn't even considered.

In 1976, over 40 years after being accused, the last Scottsboro defendant was finally pardoned.

Image: “The Scottsboro Boys” meet with their attorney;  
From Douglas Linder's Famous American Trials website.

## Compare History with Fiction

Discuss the Scottsboro Trial with students. As a class, identify similarities between the historical Scottsboro trial and the fictional trial of Tom Robinson.

- Identify similarities and differences between the two trials - the charges, the accused, the defense, the prosecution, community response, and outcome.
- Describe the similarities or differences between the historical and fictional characters of *To Kill a Mockingbird* - Haywood Patterson and Tom Robinson; Victoria Price/Ruby Bates and Mayella Ewell; Judge Horton and Atticus Finch.
- Consider: In what ways does a fictional account of courtroom drama differ from a more historical account?

Ask students to read the excerpts from Judge Horton and Atticus Finch's comments to the jury on the adjacent page and consider the following questions:

- What do these comments reveal about race relations in the south in 1933?
- How does Judge Horton's speech compare to Atticus' summary? How does it differ?
- Based on your knowledge of an actual court case (The Scottsboro Trials), does Atticus Finch's courageous defense of Tom Robinson seem realistic or overly idealistic?

After discussing these, ask students to consider how they would address the jury in Tom Robinson's case. Students should write a speech addressing the jury to present to the class.

## Excerpts from Judge Horton's Instructions to the Jury on April 8, 1933

She admitted on the witness stand in this trial that she had perjured herself in the other case. In considering the evidence, you may consider not only her lack of virtue as admitted by her here, but also that she contradicted her previous testimony as perjured.

If in your minds the conviction of this defendant depends on the testimony of Victoria Price and you are convinced she has not sworn truly about any material point, you count not convict this defendant...

Take the evidence, sift it out and find the truths and untruths and render your verdict. It will not be easy to keep your minds solely on the evidence. Much prejudice has crept into it. It has come not only from far away, but from here at home as well.

I have done what I thought to be right as the judge of this court no matter what the personal cost to me might be...

There have been some statement in regard to whether or not some other person thinks this way or that, or whether or not public opinion is one way or the other.

Gentlemen, that hasn't anything to do with it – what outside opinion or public opinion is, or whether or not he ideas of somebody else may be one way or the other. No, gentlemen, we are not to consider that at any time.

I know the juries of this county. I have been with them – have been before them. They are sensible, reasonable, intelligent men. They do not go off on side issues, nor do they let petty prejudices enter into the trial of the case.

You are not trying whether or not the defendant is white or black – you are not trying that question; you are trying whether or not this defendant forcibly ravished a woman...

You are here at home as jurors, a jury of your citizens under oath sitting in the jury box taking the evidence and considering it, leaving out any outside influences.

Judge Horton's speech text excerpted from Douglas Linder's website:  
[http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/FTrials/scottsboro/SB\\_tri33tml.html](http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/FTrials/scottsboro/SB_tri33tml.html)  
Atticus Finch's speech text from the play adaptation by Christopher Sergel.

## Excerpts from Atticus Finch's comments to the jury in *To Kill A Mockingbird*, a full-length play based upon the novel by Harper Lee

Gentlemen, this case is not a difficult one, it requires no minute sifting of complicated facts. This case is as simple as black and white. The State has not produced one iota of evidence that the crime Tom Robinson is charged with ever took place. It has relied instead upon the testimony of two witnesses – witnesses whose testimony has not only been called into serious question on cross-examination, but has been flatly contradicted by the defendant...

So a quiet, respectable Negro man...had to put his word against his two white accusers. I need not remind you of *their* conduct here in court – their cynical confidence that you gentlemen would go along with them on the assumption – the evil assumption – that *all* Negroes lie, that *all* Negroes are basically immoral...the truth is, some Negroes lie, and some Negro men are not to be trusted around women – black or white. And so with some white men. This is a truth that applies to the entire human race, and to no particular race.

In this year of grace, 1935, we're beginning to hear more references to Thomas Jefferson's phrase about all men being created equal. But we know that all men are not created equal – in the sense that some men are smarter than others, some have more opportunity because they're born with it, some men make more money, some ladies make better cakes, some people are born gifted beyond the normal scope - But there's one way in which all men are created equal. There's one human institution that makes the pauper the equal of a Rockefeller, the stupid man the equal to an Einstein. That institution, gentlemen, is a court of law. In our courts – all men are created equal.

But a court is only as sound as its jury, and a jury is only as sound as the men who make it up. I'm confident that you gentlemen will review without passion the evidence you've heard, come to a decision, and restore this defendant to his family.



# Understanding Perspectives: Point of View

Many students read without questioning a text or analyzing the author's viewpoint. This lesson encourages students to question what they are reading by looking at the author's purpose and examining multiple viewpoints.

**Grade Level:** 7-12

**Standards addressed:** English Standards 2, 3, and 8 – Communication, Writing, and Literature  
Theatre Standards 1.0 and 2.0 – Script Writing and Character Acting

**Objectives:** The student will examine the importance of point of view.  
The student will analyze a character from *To Kill a Mockingbird*.  
The student will apply character analysis to compose journal entries as the character.

**Materials needed:** images from the adjacent page (or other images of your choice that show point of view), copies of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, post-it notes, index cards with character names

## Instructional procedures:

**Set** – Show students the images from the adjacent page, one at a time and answer the following questions about each: Whose point of view is each image focused on? What story does each one tell you? How and why does the meaning of the photo change? What are the strengths of each? Does either story tell the full truth with no bias? Why?

- Stories are not reflections of reality but are selective versions of it, told from a particular view. The author positions the reader to respond to a story in particular ways through the use of language, point of view, etc.
- Towards the beginning of the story, Atticus tells Scout and Jem, “You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view . . . until you climb into his skin and walk around in it.” What does Atticus mean by this?
- Scout narrates *To Kill a Mockingbird* in first person, looking back in retrospect an unspecified number of years after the events take place. How does Scout’s point of view affect the narration of the story? Does her age make a difference? What are the strengths of the narration being her point of view? What impact does Scout’s perspective have on the novel? What information does her point of view omit or distort?
- Give each student an index card with a character name on it and several post-it notes. (Characters should include main characters, but also descriptions of minor characters, such as a member of the black community sitting in the balcony, a member of the jury who believed that Tom was innocent but was afraid to go against the other jurors, a newspaper reporter from New York covering the trial, Reverend Sykes, Miss Maudie, etc. Some students may have the same character name).
- Students should search through the book and place at least 5 post-its on pages that highlight different aspects of their character. On the post-it, they should note the page number and write a sentence that explains what the passage teaches about the character.
- On a separate sheet of paper, students should answer the following questions about their character:
  - ✓ What 3 adjectives best describe the character’s personality traits?
  - ✓ What 2 questions would you like to ask this character that would help you understand the individual?
  - ✓ What 2 objects or symbols do you associate with this character?
  - ✓ How does this character feel about the Tom Robinson trial and the outcome?
  - ✓ How does this character’s point of view differ from the narrator?
  - ✓ Would this character be a reliable narrator?
- When students have finished answering the question, have students turn to someone near them and share about their character.



- Next, students will write 2 journal entries from the character's point of view. One should come from any part of the novel before the trial and one should be written immediately after the trial verdict. Ask them to accurately and appropriately represent the character in a voice that seems authentic to that individual as well as reveal some previously unknown fact from the character's life.

**Closure** - Use the journal entries as dramatic monologues to present to the class. Depending on time, you may wish to have students volunteer, choose only one of their journal entries, or perform both in a separate class period.

**Assessment:** Students should stick their post-it notes to the paper with their character answers to turn in with their journal entries.



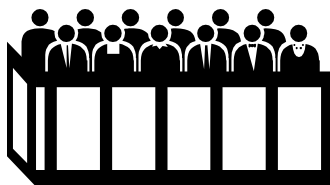
42-16643571 fotosearch.com



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**Extensions:**

- As a social studies extension, discuss how history is usually told from a particular viewpoint, and even history books change or tell one side of a story. (Have students read *1984*? Does our government change history?) Research historical events using sources from other countries. How does their version differ from ours?
- Debate - Select volunteers to debate one version of a story from different character viewpoints. Use a story all are familiar with, such as a fairy tale.
- Mock trial – Have students volunteer for different roles (e.g., judge, jury, lawyers, defendants, plaintiffs). Most students are familiar with courtroom proceedings from television programs, but some guidelines should be developed ahead of time. For example, lawyers are limited to "time on the floor" to present their arguments and the judge and jury make the final ruling. Give them a simple topic to start with, and progress to more controversial topics as comfort allows.



# Don't Judge a Book by its Cover: Creating a Just World



Students will gain sensitivity as to why authors use euphemisms in literature, how the words they use might hurt others, and the responsibilities of citizens to affect change within their world.

**Grade Level: 9-12**

**Standards addressed:** English Standard 5 – Logic

Social Studies Standards 4.0, 6.0 – Governance and Civics; Individuals, Groups, and Interactions

**Objectives:** The student will define and give examples of the following words: *oppression, labeling, euphemism, stereotype, prejudice, racism, judgment, intolerance, segregation, injustice, scapegoat, and persecution.*

The student will recognize the impact of intolerance, stereotyping, and name-calling, as well as his/her role within the community to create change.

The student will formulate resolutions to these issues and present them in a mock government organization.

**Materials needed:** paper, dictionaries if needed, paper, copy of *To Kill a Mockingbird*

## Instructional Procedures, Day One:

**Set** - On the board, list the following words before students enter the classroom: *oppression, labeling, euphemism, stereotype, prejudice, racism, judgment, intolerance, segregation, injustice, scapegoat, and persecution.* These words will remain throughout the 2 days of lessons. Begin class by showing a clip of the song "Status Quo" from *High School Musical*. (You can find this clip on YouTube if you don't have access to the full DVD).

- Begin a discussion with students about how people use labels to describe others and how these labels can refer to such characteristics as looks, clothing, the way a person talks or walks, and the groups that they belong to.
- Explain that categorizing people is a natural thing to do. Many people like to think of people as belonging to groups because it gives a sense of order and direction. Grouping can make many people feel comfortable. Sometimes, however, people make assumptions about groups of people they don't even know.
- Elicit examples from the class of categories that are used at school to group people and list them on the board. Some suggestions may include brains, people who sing or play instruments, drama kids, jocks, kids who get good grades, kids who don't get good grades, people who wear fashionable clothing, etc. Write the categories that the class generates on the board.
- Ask the following: Do the labels tell you what a person is really like? How do assumptions about a group or person affect your behavior toward them?
- Tell the class that an overly simple picture or opinion of a person, group, or thing is called a stereotype. One example of a stereotype would be thinking that any person who gets good grades always exhibits good behavior. When people stereotype, do they think about the individual, the person behind the category?
- How might a stereotype cause one person to act unfairly toward another? Have you ever judged a person or assumed what the person was like based on a stereotype? Have you ever chosen, based on a stereotype, not to sit next to someone? Do students know the phrase "Don't judge a book by its cover"? How does this apply to life?
- Other types of stereotypes could involve people's race or where they come from. (**Note:** *in bringing up examples of stereotypes, be very mindful of the sensitivities of the specific students in your class.*) Students were not shy about calling out examples of general stereotypes. Would they give examples under the heading "Racism" as easily, or would they feel uncomfortable? Why or why not? Why are these words hard to say out loud for most people? Play devil's advocate by saying "They're just words."
- Split the class into pairs or small groups and assign each group one of the words that were written on the board when they entered. Each group will create a definition of the term, and write two examples of the word – one should be a real-life example (historical or current) and one should be from *To Kill a Mockingbird*.
- Ask for a volunteer from each group to share their definition and 1 example to the class.
- Individually, students should create two columns on a sheet of paper. In the left column, they should list any words used to describe them or the groups to which they belong in school, and to note who uses each word -- whether it is a specific person or a group of people. In the right-hand column, have them write how each of these words affects them.
- Discuss - Why do these words have any effect on us at all? How many of you have ever used one of these words to describe someone else? Why did you use it? How did it feel to use it?

**Closure** - Students participate in a silent discussion based on the assignment and *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Large pieces of butcher paper should be placed around the room with questions written on the top of them. Students are asked to respond to the questions, as well as to comment on their classmates answers, in writing only. No speaking will be allowed. The teacher should also participate in the silent discussion. They should not sign their names to the statements.

**Questions for silent discussion:**

- ✓ Which word on your list hurts the most when it is used against you? Why and how does it hurt you?
- ✓ Why are racial stereotypes used in novels like *To Kill a Mockingbird*?
- ✓ Why is it difficult for us to read or say words like this?
- ✓ Why do people use words as weapons?
- ✓ What would you like people to know about you that they wouldn't find out from a stereotype?

**Homework:** Students will do a “field study,” recording and reporting the labeling used by students in their school. They should find a place where students congregate and are allowed to talk (i.e. the cafeteria, hallway, locker room, etc.) and listen. Ask them to try to choose a place they do not usually hang out, and consider using time between classes, before/after school, or lunchtime. Students should record any word used to describe another, whether it is said jokingly or seriously, or seems to them to be negative or positive. They should note the tone used and the context (such as the gist of the conversation, the relationship of the speakers, the space in which the conversation took place, etc.).

**Assessment:** Students should turn in their definitions and examples of each word for assessment. Teacher will also monitor work as they create their lists and participate in classroom and silent discussions.

**Instructional Procedures, Day Two:**

**Set** - When students enter, they will see the words PEACE and TOLERANCE written over the words from the last lesson.

- Begin class with a discussion about their findings from the field study. What surprised them? How common are words like those that came up yesterday? What did they notice about how language was used in different contexts?
- Words are just a small part of these issues. Ask - What would a world be like without these things? (stereotypes, racial comments, etc.) What do we need to do to get there?
- Assign groups, or keep the same groups from the previous lesson. In groups, develop a proposal for a fictional “Department of Peace” in the government. The proposal should include operating procedures, areas of responsibility, a mission statement, and departmental goals.

**Closure** - Students participate in a final silent discussion based on the assignment and *To Kill a Mockingbird*. As before, butcher paper should be placed around the room with questions written on the top. Students are asked to respond to the questions, as well as to comment on their classmates answers, in writing only. No speaking will be allowed.

- ✓ Is peace unattainable in our world today?
- ✓ Will you change any of your language or behavior as a result of doing this exercise? If so, how?
- ✓ How can you help create tolerance in your world?
- ✓ What kind of hate language occurs in our school? How can you stop it?
- ✓ In your opinion, what is the correlation between peace and tolerance?

**Assessment:** Monitor classroom and silent discussions. Groups will turn in their written proposal.

**Extension:** Consider having students create a presentation to show their proposal in another class period. Each group could create a full presentation including visual aids to present to the class.



*Harper Lee showed feistiness in her 1966 letter to the editor in response to the attempts of a Richmond, Virginia area school board to ban *To Kill a Mockingbird* as “immoral literature”. Below is an excerpt from the letter.*

*“Recently I have received echoes down this way of the Hanover County School Board’s activities, and what I’ve heard makes me wonder if any of its members can read.*

*Surely it is plain to the simplest intelligence that “*To Kill a Mockingbird*” spells out in words of seldom more than two syllables a code of honor and conduct, Christian in its ethic, that is the heritage of all Southerners. To hear that the novel is “immoral” has made me count the years between now and 1984, for I have yet to come across a better example of doublethink.*

*I feel, however, that the problem is one of illiteracy, not Marxism. Therefore I enclose a small contribution to the Beadle Bumble Fund that I hope will be used to enroll the Hanover County School Board in any first grade of its choice.”*

# I Look at the World: Langston Hughes

Poet Langston Hughes wrote about the lives and experiences of his fellow African Americans, including the struggle of oppression and the fight for equality. In this activity, students will compare one of his works with *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and create a poem to represent their own view of the world.

**Grade Level:** 8-12

**Standards addressed:** Social Studies Standards 5.0, 6.0 – History, Individuals, Groups and Interactions  
English Standards 3 and 8 – Writing and Literature

**Objectives:** The student will analyze Langston Hughes poem “I look at the world” in relation to the study of *To Kill a Mockingbird*.  
The student will rewrite the poem to reflect his/her own view.  
The student will design a bookmark using symbols to represent themselves.

**Materials needed:** 2x7 pieces of white poster board (bookmark size, one for each student), colored pencils or markers, pencils, copies of Langston Hughes poem “I look at the world”

## Instructional Procedures:

Set: A copy of Langston Hughes’ poem “I look at the world” will be placed on each student’s desk before they arrive.

- Read the poem entitled “I look at the world” by Langston Hughes out loud. Hughes’ writing was so powerful, that it gave a voice and understanding to many Americans across the nation at a time when they were oppressed and not understood.
- Have students consider how this particular poem might apply to the story of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Which character do they think would feel this way? What words and lines make them think so?
- As a class, choose a character from the story and rewrite the poem to represent that character. (For example – Mayella Ewell might say “I look at the world, From sad, poor eyes in a beaten face, And this is what I see: This dirty, lonely place, One way to feel free.”)
- Using the same strategy, students now should change the words to tell their own story. How do they look at the world, their surroundings, and themselves?
- Next, ask students to consider the importance of symbols in literature. What does the symbol of the mockingbird represent in this book? Apply your knowledge of literary symbols to decide what symbols might represent you and how you look at the world.
- Pass out the bookmarks. Students will now create a bookmark that represents themselves and their view of life. On one side, students will write their completed poem. On the other side, students will represent themselves by using colors, symbols, patterns and images that best illustrate their feelings and view of life.

Closure – The teacher will share his/her own version of the poem and chosen symbols to encourage others to volunteer. Ask for volunteers to read their poem out loud and talk about the symbols they chose to represent themselves.

**Assessment:** Students will turn in their poem and bookmark for assessment before teacher returns the items to them.

**Extension:** Langston Hughes wrote many poems that apply to the time period of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, as well as the continued struggles of African Americans. He even wrote a poem about the Scottsboro case. Discuss Langston Hughes’ poetry and compare several of his poems to the story. Have students prepare an oral presentation of a group of Hughes’ poems of their own selection and read them to the class.

## I look at the world

By Langston Hughes

*I look at the world  
From awakening eyes in a black face -  
And this is what I see:  
This fenced-off narrow space  
Assigned to me.*

*I look then at the silly walls  
Through dark eyes in a dark face -  
And this is what I know:  
That all these walls oppression builds  
Will have to go!*

*I look at my own body  
With eyes no longer blind -  
And I see that my own hands can make  
The world that’s in my mind.  
Then let us hurry, comrades,  
The road to find.*



## More Ideas

### Write an Editorial

Research life for African Americans during the Jim Crow era, and have students write a newspaper editorial about the unjust treatment and lack of respect given to Tom Robinson in the courtroom. Allow them to choose an opinion or divide the class so that students write for different audiences or perspectives, like a black paper or a white paper, or a Northern or Southern paper.

### Create a Newsletter

Create a newsletter covering the trial of Tom Robinson, prepared by students in small groups. The newsletter should chronicle the events of the Robinson trial as well as cover related articles on similar issues of actual occurrences during the same time period.

### Character “Meet and Greet”

You are cordially invited to dine and delight with all the famous Maycomb citizens from the novel! Students will choose a character from the novel and assume his/her identity. They will write out a full character analysis to turn in including Character’s name, Age, Place of birth, Occupation (if child, say student), something about their family life (spouse, children, siblings, parents), Accomplishments/achievements, Interests, and Attitude/feelings toward The Finches, The Trial and Tom Robinson. Then, students will interact with one another as their characters. Depending on how in depth you wish to go, students could be asked to bring a southern-style dish for the social hour or wear an article of clothing or accessory that suits the character.

### Create a CD cover

Music is a very important part of African American history, including the Civil Rights Movement. In this activity, students will create a CD cover based on *To Kill a Mockingbird*. As a class, give examples of possible CD titles, covers, and song titles (at least 5). Students should be creative and use their imaginations to create the titles. Give each student an empty, blank CD case and white paper to fit into the case. Students will create a CD cover and song titles to display for the class.

### Town Poem

Create an imaginary town based on what you have learned about the time period of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Students should take emotional possession of the town and let their imagination give each person, building, and object its own story. What are the town secrets? What is the mood or tone of the town? Write a poem about your town in the second person.

### Watch the Film!

The Oscar-winning film version of the book has become an American film classic. Compare the film with the book and play versions.

## Web Resources

### Tennessee Repertory Theatre

<http://www.tennesseerep.org/index.php>

### Monroe County Heritage Museum

<http://www.tokillamockingbird.com/>

### Exploring Topics of History, Culture, and Politics:

A compilation of websites relating to the story and time period.

<http://www.rbhs208.org/hart/TKAM.htm>

### PBS American Experience – Scottsboro: An American Tragedy

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/scottsboro/>

### National Endowment for the Arts, The Big Read: To Kill a Mockingbird -

<http://www.neabigread.org/books/mockingbird/>

### SparkNotes: To Kill a Mockingbird

<http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/mocking>

### Harper Lee

<http://www.harperlee.com/index.htm>

### Encyclopedia of Alabama

<http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/face/Home.jsp>

### New World Encyclopedia – Jim Crow Laws

[http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Jim\\_Crow\\_laws](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Jim_Crow_laws)

### CBS News: "To Kill a Mockingbird" Turns 50

<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2010/07/11/sunday/main6667444.shtml>

### All Great Quotes: To Kill a Mockingbird

[http://www.allgreatquotes.com/to\\_kill\\_a\\_mockingbird\\_quotes.shtml](http://www.allgreatquotes.com/to_kill_a_mockingbird_quotes.shtml)

### AARP – Article “50th Anniversary of *To Kill a Mockingbird*”

- Former first lady, writers and actors recall how the classic novel changed their lives

[http://www.aarp.org/entertainment/books/info-07-2010/what\\_is\\_good\\_in\\_america.html](http://www.aarp.org/entertainment/books/info-07-2010/what_is_good_in_america.html)

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