

# TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD

by Harper Lee

- The story is about a young girl who witnesses a town's mistreatment of people.
- The story is told from the young girl's point of view.
- The MAIN characters are good people witnessing prejudice.
- The young girl describes the prejudice honestly and at times descriptively.
- The language of the novel is at times vernacular – meaning that the language includes slang words and even derogatory words which were used by prejudiced people.
- Some of the prejudice described in the story includes:
  - white against black      black against white      poor against rich
  - rich against poor      girls against boys      boys against girls
- The story includes some great advice for how to live a good life. These are found in such quotes as “mobs are made of people.”
- The story describes the lifestyle of southern America in the post-Depression era of the late 1930s.
- The story describes the judicial system of Alabama and the country in the 1930s.
- One character is described as a hero.

Through our study of this novel, we will explore our views regarding:

- The power of language and “loaded” words in particular
- The causes and dangers of prejudice
- The causes and dangers of gender stereotyping
- The qualities of a hero
- The definition of and effects of using symbolism in a work of literature
- The current judicial system operating in the United States

**Quote Assignment: Throughout the novel, students will be asked to select significant quotes from certain chapters and provide an analysis of the quote. Here are several examples to be used as models.**

## Chapter 1

### Quote:

"Maycomb was an old town, but it was a tired old town when I first knew it. In rainy weather the streets turned to red slop; grass grew on the sidewalks, the courthouse sagged in the square. Somehow it was hotter then: a black dog suffered on a summers day; bony mules hitched to Hoover carts flicked flies in the sweltering shade of the live oaks on the square. Men's stiff collars wilted by nine in the morning. Ladies bathed before noon, after their three-o'clock naps, and by nightfall were like soft teacakes with frostings of sweat and sweet talcum"(Lee 5).

### Analysis:

The descriptive detail the narrator gives paints a vivid picture of the town of Maycomb. This gives us some insight as how Scout feels about Maycomb. You can tell that she feels that her town is boring and slow-paced. This also gives the setting for the story. The mood of this passage emphasizes the quiet and somewhat dull town. This is ironic because an occurrence will take place soon that will change the entire town of Maycomb. The quiet, calm, nostalgic mood of the town contrasts with a climatic event that is soon to occur.

## Chapter 2

### Quote:

"Your father does not know how to teach. You can have a seat now.'  
I mumbled that I was sorry and retired meditating upon my crime"(Lee 17).

### Analysis:

Scout's first grade teacher was making Scout feel bad about being able to read, when in fact, she should feel proud that she could read and write at such a young age. Scout even apologized and referred to her ability as a crime. This quote shows the irony of education during this time. The teacher scolds Scout because her father "does not know how to teach" and yet Atticus has obviously done a great job at teaching her to read and Miss Caroline does not seem to have any idea of how to teach these children. Further, the end result is Scout feeling bad for learning, which is contradictory to the purpose of school.

## Chapter 3

### Quote:

"First of all,' he said, 'If you can learn a simple trick, Scout, you'll get along a lot better with all kinds of folks. You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view-' 'Sir?' '-until you climb into his skin and walk around in it'" (Lee 30).

### Analysis:

This passage helped me to realize the special bond between Atticus and his daughter, Scout. It seems as though Scout learns more from her father than she does anywhere else. Atticus teaches Scout important things that she does not acquire from school, such as social skills and basic information about life. Scout listens carefully to Atticus, which shows she has much respect for him and that she values his advice. This quote also shows Atticus' maturity and sensitivity when dealing with a difficult situation involving his daughter. Atticus allows Scout to tell her side of the story, and instead of yelling or forcing her to go to school, he reasons with her and uses this as an opportunity to teach her a major life lesson. I imagine that this advice will come up again later in the novel.

## To Kill A Mockingbird - Literary Elements

*Pages 3-16 of this packet are adapted from "Portals to Literature" by Mary Gillaspay.*

**Chapter 1 - Exposition** is the part of a work of fiction in which the reader is given the background information he or she needs to know. Reread the first four pages of the book and record what you learned about the **setting**, the main **characters**, and the beginnings of a **plot conflict** in the chart below.

**Setting** – Maycomb

## **Characters –**

Scout –

Jem –

Dill –

Atticus –

Calpurnia –

## **Plot – Conflict**

**Chapter 2 - Point of View** in literature refers to the voice telling the story. It could be the author as a narrator or one of the characters in the story.

Who is telling the story? What point of view is this?

Is it being told as it happens or as a memory of times past?

How do you think this point of view will affect the information that is given to the reader? How will it affect the language the narrator uses and her interpretation of events?

### Chapter 3

Draw and fill in a **Venn Diagram** to show the similarities and differences between the Cunningham family and the Ewell family.

**Satire** in literature is the ridicule of any subject, idea, person, or institution for the purpose of reform. How was the institution of education satirized in this book?

Do you think the author used satire in order to suggest serious reform or to gently poke fun at teachers and the educational system of the time period? Explain.

Who is presented as intelligent in the novel so far? Where did they learn what they know?

**Chapters 1-3 – Mood** is the emotional impact of a scene. An author works on the reader's emotions through **mood**. An author also engages readers intellectually by inviting them to make **inferences**. **Inferences** are logical conclusions or opinions reached through reasoning. By reading **mood** and **inferences** correctly, readers can gain important insights into a work. These two literary devices can indicate how the plot will unfold or how relationships will develop. For each of the experiences below, choose a mood and write out what inferences you can make about a character's personality, relationships between characters, or Maycomb in general from the episode. (Go to the next page for the questions that go with this introduction.)

scornful  
suspicious  
frightening  
warm

suspenseful  
humorous  
respectful  
reflective

sympathetic  
understanding  
comforting  
critical

expectant  
mysterious  
saddening

**Example:** Atticus' first experience with criminal law involved two men who were hanged for stupidly insisting they were innocent. Atticus developed a dislike for criminal law from this experience. The mood is reflective,

humorous, and sympathetic. I can infer that Atticus dislikes seeing anyone's blood shed and he feels that the legal system is not perfect.

1. Scout resents Cal, believing that the housekeeper is too strict a disciplinarian.
2. Jem and Scout are pleased when Dill comes to spend the summer in Maycomb. His arrival brings some excitement into what they believe is an otherwise dull existence.
3. Cal lets Scout watch her cook supper, kisses her and gives her one of her favorite treats. Scout concludes that Cal knew all along that she was being unfair and was too stubborn to admit it.
4. Because he was guilty of some harmless mischief as a teen, Boo Radley was imprisoned in his father's house where he has remained shut inside for years.
5. On a dare, Jem runs up to the Radley house and touches it. No one comes out, but the kids see a shutter move on one of the windows.
6. Scout begs Atticus to let her quit school. After listening to her story, he reminds her that one way to get along in the world is to see things from others' viewpoints.
7. Atticus tells Scout that they will continue reading like always, but that she has to keep it a secret.

## **Chapters 7-9**

**Foreshadowing** is when an author hints at things to come. Foreshadowing is used for two main purposes. First, it stirs the reader's curiosity and creates suspense. Second, it helps to make the story seem more realistic because even surprising events seem believable if hints have been dropped along and along to prepare the reader. For the following events, predict what they might foreshadow.

Example: When the kids play the Boo Radley game, they are scared that they are going to get caught. Prediction: Someone, probably Atticus, will catch them playing the game.

1. Scout gets into trouble on her first day of school because she can read and write.

2. The Ewells are allowed to operate outside of the law in Maycomb County.
  
3. Scout describes Mrs. Henry Lafayette Dubose as the meanest old woman who ever lived.
  
4. Atticus says he is sure Jem will keep a cool head in the face of upcoming events, but he is worried that Scout will not be able to do the same.
  
5. Atticus cannot understand why “reasonable people go stark raving mad” over anything concerning blacks.

## Chapter 11

So far in the novel, Atticus has taken the opportunity to “teach” the kids something valuable on several occasions. List three things that Atticus has taught the kids and tell how he taught them these lessons.

1.

2.

3.

**Chapters 10-12 - Imagery** refers to language which appeals to many of the five senses. By using imagery, writers can communicate more than just a picture. In fact, they can even create the mood or emotional atmosphere of a scene. Being able to both sense and feel a scene makes reader participants, placing them in the midst of action. Reread the scenes listed below and find words that appeal to the senses listed in parentheses. Then, choose the mood created by the imagery of the scene.

- The neighborhood waits for Atticus to shoot the mad dog. (Sight, Sound) Mood? a. peaceful b. tense c. desolate d. angry
  
- Scout and Jem go together to Mrs. Dubose’s house for the first time. (Sight, Sound, Smell) Mood? a. tragic  
b. tense c. humorous d. gruesome
  
- The children enter the church, observe the interior, and listen as Zeebo lines a hymn. (Sight, Sound) Mood?  
a. reverent b. contented c. heartwarming

**Chapters 10-12** - Verbal Irony and Situational Irony are commonly used in prose. An example of verbal irony would be when Scout says “The internal arrangements of the Finch house were indicative of Simon’s...absolute trust with which he regarded his offspring”. This is ironic because he obviously did not trust his daughters at all since he put the exit to their bedroom in his room. Irony of situation occurs when the teacher scolds Scout for learning to read. One would not think that a teacher would be upset that her student could already read.

Why is **Irony** used?

- It can help an author underscore a point without preaching.
- It can help develop a character by showing how a person perceives reality.
- It can serve as a means of introducing humor.

For the following examples, tell what the irony is and why the author used it.

1. Scout thinks that Mrs. Dubose will shoot Jem when Atticus sends him over to apologize for messing up her flowers.
  
2. Scout thinks that Atticus can’t do anything cool.
  
3. Scout thought that all churches had hymnals and printed orders of service.

**Chapters 12-14** - The careful choice of three **adjectives** or descriptive words encapsulated Aunt Alexandra’s appearance and character. Use the chart below to do the same thing for the other main characters of the book.

<b>Character</b>	<b>Adjective #1</b>	<b>Adjective #2</b>	<b>Adjective #3</b>
Aunt Alexandra	enarmored	upright	uncompromising
Atticus			
Scout			
Jem			
Calpurnia			