

Exploring *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Alabama Author Harper Lee

Lesson plan created by
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Grade: 11

Goals/Objectives:

1. The student will read *To Kill a Mockingbird*, by Harper Lee, then participate in classroom discussion about the book, its themes, tone, and characters.
2. The student will write a brief biography of the author, Harper Lee.
3. The student will research historical events about African Americans that occurred during the time setting of the book.
4. The student will demonstrate an understanding of point of view by writing a paper about events of Tom Robinson's trial from one of the characters' point of view.

Curriculum standards:

Alabama Course of Study (www.alsde.edu/html/sections/)

English Language Arts

1. Read for a variety of purposes using appropriate strategies for comprehension.
5. Read selections by American authors and secondary sources by literary critics (1900 to the present).
9. Differentiate points of view.
22. Conduct individual research using all aspects of the research process.
24. Participate constructively in classroom and small-group discussion.

Social Sciences

6. Describe social and economic conditions from the 1920s through the Great Depression, factors leading to a deepening crisis, and successes and failures associated with the programs and policies of the New Deal.
 - Identifying notable authors of the period
12. Trace events of the modern Civil Rights Movement from post-World War II to 1970 that resulted in social and economic changes, including the Montgomery bus boycott, the desegregation of Little Rock Central High School, the march on Washington, and the Freedom Rides.

Literacy Partners: A Principal's Guide to an Effective Library Media Program for the 21st Century. (2000). "Appendix B K-12 Information Objectives." Eleventh Grade. (<http://www.alsde.edu/general/LiteracyPartners.pdf>)

Access

- Read selections written after 1900 by American authors and critiques of those works.

Evaluate

- Differentiate among various points of view.

Use

- Employ critical listening skills in class discussions, lectures and speeches – noting aspects that affect meaning.
- Produce graphs, charts, and models that clarify and explain complex information.
- Sequence historical events.

Pre-lesson Activities:

1. The teacher will introduce the book *To Kill a Mockingbird*, by Harper Lee.
2. The students will complete an independent reading of the book before a predetermined date.

Activities:

1. The students will participate in a teacher-led class discussion of the book. The teacher will offer guiding questions as provided on discussion sheet (attached).
2. The student will complete a biographical summary of Harper Lee, using the Alabama literary map "This Goodly Land". (see Web site listed at Web Resources) as their primary resource. Summary must include date of birth, residence, education, works published, awards/honors, and brief summary of career as an author.
3. The student will access/read information from the History Matters Web site* to use in answering the following questions:
 - a. Define Jim Crow. What is a Jim Crow law?
 - b. Describe the economic, social, and legal status of African Americans during the time of Jim Crow.
 - c. How were African Americans attacked during this time?
 - d. Did African Americans have any defense against acts of violence waged against them?(*See web sites listed at Web Resources)
4. The student will select the role of someone who was involved with or someone who observed Tom Robinson's trial (see list below), then write an account of the trial from that person's point of view.

- - - 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 members of the jury
- - - a newspaper reporter from New York who was covering the trial
- - - Judge Taylor in his later years writing his memoirs

- - - Reverend Sykes
- - - Atticus writing in his journal
- - - Miss Maudie Atkinson
- - - Aunt Alexander

Materials:

1. *To Kill a Mockingbird*, by Harper Lee
2. Discussion Questions
3. Computer
4. Internet access

Web Resources:

Alabama literary map “This Goodly Land”, <http://www.alabamaliterarymap.org/>
 History Matters – <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/>
 Remembering Jim Crow – <http://americanradioworks.org/features/remembering/>
 Bitter Times – <http://americanradioworks.org/features/remembering/bitter.html>
 Danger Violence and Exploitation –
<http://americanradioworks.org/features/remembering/danger.html>
 Jim Crow Laws – <http://americanradioworks.org/features/remembering/laws.html>

Evaluation:

The student will be evaluated on the following:

1. Participation in class discussion
2. Completion of author biography. (Biography must include date of birth, residence, education, works published, awards/honors, and brief summary of career as an author.)
3. Completion of African American historical questions
4. Completion of Point of View paper

Extended Activities:

Social Sciences (Map skills):

Mapping the Mockingbird –

http://www.education-world.com/a_tsl/archives/00-1/lesson0005.shtml

A Historical Perspective on To Kill a Mockingbird –

<http://memory.loc.gov/learn/lessons/98/mock/intro.html>

Language Arts:

Maycomb News Today –

<http://www.eduref.org/cgi-bin/Virtual/Lessons/LanguageArtrs/Literature/>

Create a Memory Box –

<http://home.cogeco.ca/~rayser3/Membox.txt>

Tea with Miss Alexander – <http://home.cogeco.ca/~rayser3/maycomb.txt>

Write a poem about the story, a theme from the story, or one or more of the characters.

Fine Arts:

Make a tape or a CD of at least 5 songs that represent the themes/characters/events in the story. Make a cover for the CD or cassette. Write a paragraph for each song selected. Paragraphs should include connections between the song and the book.

Make a collage that represents a theme, character, or an event in the story. Attach a typed paper explaining the representations.

***To Kill a Mockingbird*, Harper Lee**

Discussion Questions

(Activity 1)

1. How do Scout, Jem, and Dill characterize Boo Radley at the beginning of the book? In what way did Boo's past history of violence foreshadow his method of protecting Jem and Scout from Bob Ewell?
2. In Scout's account of her childhood, her father Atticus reigns supreme. How would you characterize his abilities as a single parent? How would you describe his treatment of Calpurnia and Tom Robinson in comparison to his treatment of his white neighbors and colleagues? How would you describe his views on race and class in the larger context of his community and his peers?
3. The title of Lee's book is referred to when Atticus gives his children air rifles and tells them that they can shoot all the bluejays they want, but "it's a sin to kill a mockingbird." At the end of the novel, Scout likens the "sin" of naming Boo as Bob Ewell's killer to "shootin' a mockingbird." Do you think that Boo is the only innocent, or mockingbird, in this novel?
4. Scout ages two years—from six to eight—over the course of Lee's novel, which is narrated from her perspective as an adult. Did you find the account her narrator provides believable? Were there incidents or observations in the book that seemed unusually "knowing" for such a young child? What event or episode in Scout's story do you feel truly captures her personality?
5. Jem describes to Scout the four "folks" or classes of people in Maycomb County: "...our kind of folks don't like the Cunninghams, the Cunninghams don't like the Ewells, and the Ewells hate and despise the colored folks." What do you think of the ways in which Lee explores race and class in 1930s Alabama?
6. One of the chief criticisms of *To Kill a Mockingbird* is that the two central storylines - Scout, Jem, and Dill's fascination with Boo Radley and the trial between Mayella Ewell and Tom Robinson -- are not sufficiently connected in the novel. Do you think that Lee is successful in incorporating these different stories? Were you surprised at the way in which these story lines were resolved? Why or why not?
7. By the end of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, the book's first sentence: "When he was thirteen, my brother Jem got his arm badly broken at the elbow," has been explained and resolved. What did you think of the events that followed the Halloween pageant? Did

you think that Bob Ewell was capable of injuring Scout or Jem? How did you feel about Boo Radley's last-minute intervention?

8. What elements of this book did you find especially memorable, humorous, or inspiring? Are there individual characters whose beliefs, acts, or motives especially impressed or surprised you? Did any events in this book cause you to reconsider your childhood memories or experiences in a new light?