



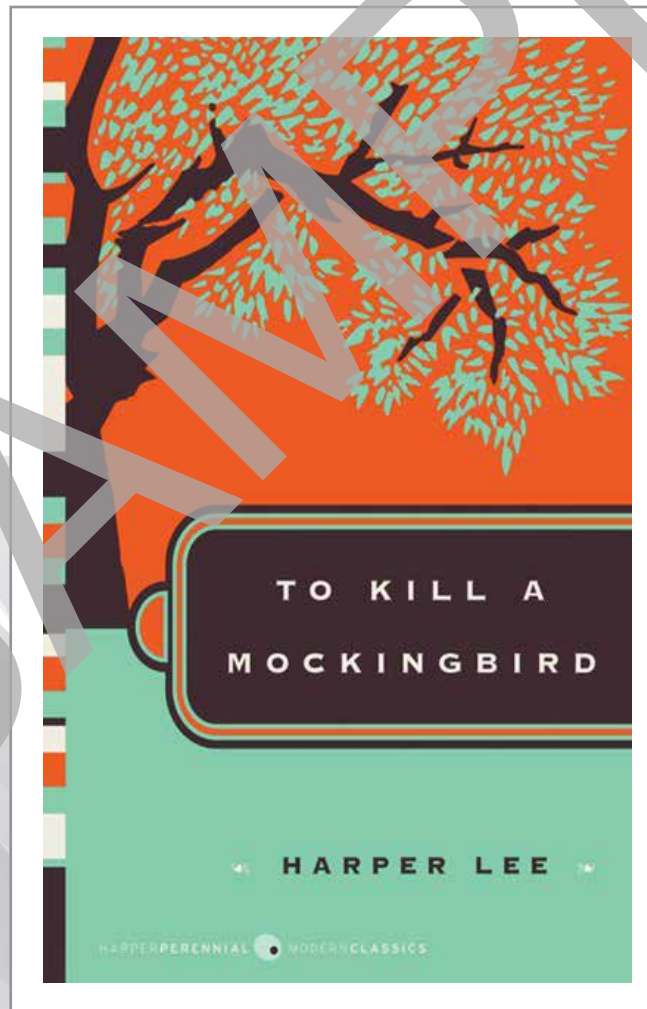
TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 9-12

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

To Kill a Mockingbird

Harper Lee



READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

To Kill a Mockingbird

Harper Lee

TEACHER GUIDE

NOTE:

The trade book edition of the novel used to prepare this guide is found in the Novel Units catalog and on the Novel Units website. Using other editions may have varied page references.

Please note: We have assigned Interest Levels based on our knowledge of the themes and ideas of the books included in the Novel Units sets, however, please assess the appropriateness of this novel or trade book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading with them. You know your students best!

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3901 Union Blvd., Suite 155

St. Louis, MO 63115

sales@novelunits.com

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Skills and Strategies

Comprehension

Identifying attributes, cause/effect, sequencing, drawing conclusions

Critical Thinking

Brainstorming, analysis, research, inferences, compare/contrast

Vocabulary

Application, glossary

Literary Elements

Character analysis, theme, setting, point of view, metaphor, genre, conflict/resolution, style, tone

Listening/Speaking

Discussion, multimedia presentation, soliloquy

Writing

Newspaper article, letter, essay, report, poetry

Across the Curriculum

History—World War I, World War II, the Great Depression, John Dewey’s educational reforms, 1930s segregation in the South (including Jim Crow laws), 1931 Scottsboro Boys case, 1960s Civil Rights Movement, Works Progress Administration (WPA), National Recovery Act (NRA); Geography—Monroeville and Monroetown, Alabama; Viewing—*To Kill a Mockingbird* (1962); Science—botany, rabies; Hobbies—Indian-Head pennies; Politics—criminal justice system (past and present); Art—sketch, diorama, landscape illustration, map, scene montage, collage; Music—gospel, bluegrass, country, folk; Literature—*Other Voices, Other Rooms* by Truman Capote

Genre: fiction

Setting: fictional town of Maycomb, Alabama; 1930s

Point of View: first person

Themes: justice, courage, respect, equality, tolerance, compassion, racism, decency, morality, empathy, coming of age, social status, human nature, judgment, loyalty, honor

Conflict: person vs. person, person vs. society, person vs. self

Style: narrative

Tone: nostalgic, candid, often humorous

Date of First Publication: 1960

Summary

Jean Louise (“Scout”) Finch recalls her childhood in Maycomb, Alabama in the early 1930s. Scout, the motherless daughter of the town’s best lawyer, Atticus Finch, engages in adventures with her older brother, Jem, and their neighbor’s nephew, Dill, who visits every summer. Many of their childish games revolve around their mysterious, reclusive neighbor, Arthur “Boo” Radley. For a time, Scout’s only problems are learning to be sufficiently ladylike and behaving in school. However, when Atticus takes on a controversial case that incites the town’s racial tensions, Scout and Jem are taunted by their peers, adult townsfolk, and even some of their own relatives. The accused man, Tom Robinson, is put on trial, and Atticus provides a strong defense which reveals glaring inconsistencies and a convincing motive on the part of Mayella Ewell, Tom’s accuser. Despite overwhelming evidence of Tom’s innocence, the jury convicts him. Shortly after the trial ends, Tom is shot and killed during an attempted prison escape. That fall, Scout and Jem are attacked by Bob Ewell, Mayella’s father, while walking home from a school pageant. Bob is stabbed and killed in the scuffle, and Scout realizes that Boo Radley—the shadowy figure that haunted her childhood—saved her and Jem. By the end of the novel, Scout has learned valuable lessons about human nature, misconceptions, and judging others unfairly.

About the Author

Nelle Harper Lee was born on April 28, 1926, in Monroeville, Alabama. The daughter of Amasa Coleman Lee—a lawyer, state legislator, newspaper publisher, and descendant of Civil War general Robert E. Lee—Lee was the youngest of four children. Her mother, Frances Cunningham Finch Lee, suffered from mental illness and rarely ventured outside their house, leaving her youngest daughter to her own devices. As a result, Lee became a bookish tomboy. After discovering her love of English literature, Lee spent her college years—first at Huntingdon College and then at the University of Alabama—as a loner who was constantly reading. Lee became an exchange student, studying for a year in England at Oxford University. She soon left law school to pursue writing full-time and moved to New York City in 1949. There, Lee reunited with fellow author and childhood friend Truman Capote (upon whom she based the character Dill Harris in *To Kill a Mockingbird*). In 1956, Broadway composer Michael Martin Brown and his wife decided to invest in Lee’s talent, allowing her to quit her day job for a year and focus on writing. Lee eventually found an agent and a publisher for *To Kill a Mockingbird*, a collection of short autobiographical stories that she morphed into her first and only novel. While awaiting *Mockingbird*’s publication, Lee served as Capote’s main research assistant for his famous nonfiction novel, *In Cold Blood*. Lee met with enormous success in 1960 with the publishing of

Part One

Chapters 1–3

Jean Louise “Scout” Finch describes the everyday goings-on in Maycomb, Alabama. Among the Finches’ neighbors, the recluse Arthur “Boo” Radley is the most terrifying to Scout, her brother Jem, and their peers. Scout begins first grade and proves to be a handful for Miss Caroline Fisher, a new teacher who is still adjusting to Maycomb’s customs. Determined to introduce new learning methods, Miss Caroline criticizes Scout for knowing how to read. She unintentionally humiliates young Walter Cunningham, whose poverty-stricken family cannot afford to provide him with a lunch. Jem invites Walter to have lunch at the Finches’ house, and Walter gladly accepts. That afternoon, Burris Ewell terrifies Miss Caroline with his head lice, then insults her and walks out. At home, Scout and Atticus strike a compromise that will permit them to continue reading together.

Vocabulary
assuaged
dictum
taciturn
unsullied
vapid
malevolent
predilection
nebulous
indigenous
sojourn
iniquities
contentious
monosyllabic
fractious
disapprobation

Discussion Questions

1. Why does Scout discuss the Finches’ family history at length at the beginning of the story? *(Scout’s interest in family history is a tribute to her Southern heritage, helps establish the novel’s small-town setting, and emphasizes the importance of class distinction in Maycomb. For example, the family history refers to Simon Finch’s ownership of slaves and to the Civil War—delicately referred to as “the disturbance between the North and the South” [p. 4]—both of which were factors in the Deep South’s lingering racial inequality and economic instability. Yet the reader also learns that, recently, some Finches have broken with tradition. For example, Scout’s father became a lawyer and her uncle became a doctor. From this information, the reader can conclude that tradition and class figure prominently into Scout’s life in Maycomb, even though some of her family members question the importance of such things. Students should note Scout’s ironic tone as she describes the Southern aristocratic attachment to English heritage, her ancestors’ less-than-noble rise to wealth, and Atticus’s modest law practice. This tongue-in-cheek tone may reflect adult Scout’s perspective, but it may also be young Scout repeating her father’s wry, self-deprecating stories.)*
2. What significant fact about Calpurnia does Scout omit in her description on pages 6–7 of the novel? Why do you think she does this? *(Scout fails to disclose that Calpurnia is black. In fact, the reader does not learn Calpurnia’s race until several pages later, and then only indirectly when Scout says, “...Calpurnia rarely commented on the ways of white people” [p. 15]. Answers will vary, but Scout may not feel it necessary to mention Calpurnia’s race since servants in Maycomb are predominantly black. Perhaps it is also because Scout views Calpurnia as a vital person in her life and thus no longer classifies her according to race or class.)*
3. Describe Scout and Jem’s first impression of Dill. How does he win them over almost immediately? *(Dill’s first appearance is a comical scene, set in a vegetable patch, with Dill at first mistaken for a puppy. His small size, big personality, outlandish name, and babyish clothing cause Scout and Jem to be initially skeptical [though they would probably be skeptical of any outsider]. However, Dill soon establishes his local roots and reveals his worldly experience [from having seen the movie Dracula]. The children’s friendship is sealed by their mutual interest in books, play-acting, and imaginary games.)*

4. Compare Scout and Jem's sources of summertime entertainment to yours. Do Scout and Jem seem bored? Why or why not? *(Scout and Jem are both avid readers, but they also enjoy physical outdoor [and mostly unsupervised] play. They enjoy spending time in nature and even built their own treehouse. Since they rarely see movies or plays, they invent their own amateur dramas to act out in the backyard. Though students' experiences will vary, most likely spend a significant portion of time watching TV, using a computer, listening to music, or playing video games. Students should note that Scout and Jem live in a slow-paced, old-fashioned town. Their neighborhood is safe, and they know all of their neighbors. Their fun has always been limited to what their imaginations could muster.)*
5. What is the source of Scout and Jem's knowledge about the Radley family history? How do you know? *(Most of their knowledge comes from local legend, which is apparent from Scout's frequent use of the word "people" in her description [e.g., "people said"]. In one instance, Scout even prefaces her explanation of Boo's arrest and disgrace with the phrase "according to neighborhood legend" [p. 12]. She repeats Jem's melodramatic story about Boo harming his own father with scissors—a story Jem had learned from the town gossip, Miss Stephanie Crawford. The children's firsthand evidence is most likely colored by their neighbors' stories. Scout's description of the dilapidated Radley house is filled with connotative words such as "dark," "rotted," "drooped," and "drunkenly." Though Scout is too naive to guess what Mr. Radley totes home in a paper bag each day, she picks up on the town's suspicion that it is not groceries. Jem's ghoulish description of Boo is flavored by the adventure books he reads; he pictures the man as a giant with a jagged scar and rotten teeth who peeps in windows, eats animals raw, and drools constantly. Atticus, who might have provided a more balanced account, refuses to discuss the Radleys with his children.)*
6. What do you think is Boo Radley's real story? *(Answers will vary. Boo may have developed an alcohol addiction in high school that likely only worsened as his stiff-necked father hid him away to avoid public scandal. A more likely explanation is that Boo had a mental breakdown as a result of his confinement in that secretive household. Mr. Radley's "meanness," as Calpurnia terms it, may have translated into abusing Arthur emotionally [if not physically], which would explain Boo's retaliation with the scissors. By the time Nathan Radley moved back to take over, lonely Boo was only a haunted shadow of his former self.)*
7. What do Miss Caroline's unconscious classroom mistakes reveal about Maycomb's children, specifically the Finches, the Cunninghams, and the Ewells? *(Miss Caroline does not realize that many of her students are farm children who are too familiar with animals to believe cute stories about talking cats. Presenting the alphabet as if it is a new concept, Miss Caroline fails to recognize that many of her students are repeating the grade as a result of missing school when needed in the fields. Miss Caroline punishes Scout—potentially her best student—for the "crime" of reading and writing. She is unaware that Scout is a motherless child who shares a special bond with her father that revolves around books. By offering Walter Cunningham charity, Miss Caroline violates the well-known Cunningham pride. She is horrified by Burris Ewell's "cootie" and overall terrible hygiene, which do not faze the down-to-earth Maycomb children. Baffled by the Ewell custom of attending school one day per year, Miss Caroline provokes a flare-up of disrespect from Burris—no surprise to Maycomb children, who know the Ewells' reputation for belligerence.)*
8. What lessons does Scout learn when Walter Cunningham comes to the Finches' home for dinner? *(First, Scout's instinct to fight Walter [for causing her to be scolded in class] is corrected by Jem, who sets an example of good manners by inviting Walter home with them. Scout notices that Walter changes as he begins to feel at ease, and she is impressed by his adult conversation with Atticus about farm matters. Scout's rude remarks about Walter drowning his meal in syrup earn her a stern scolding from Calpurnia, who has higher standards of*

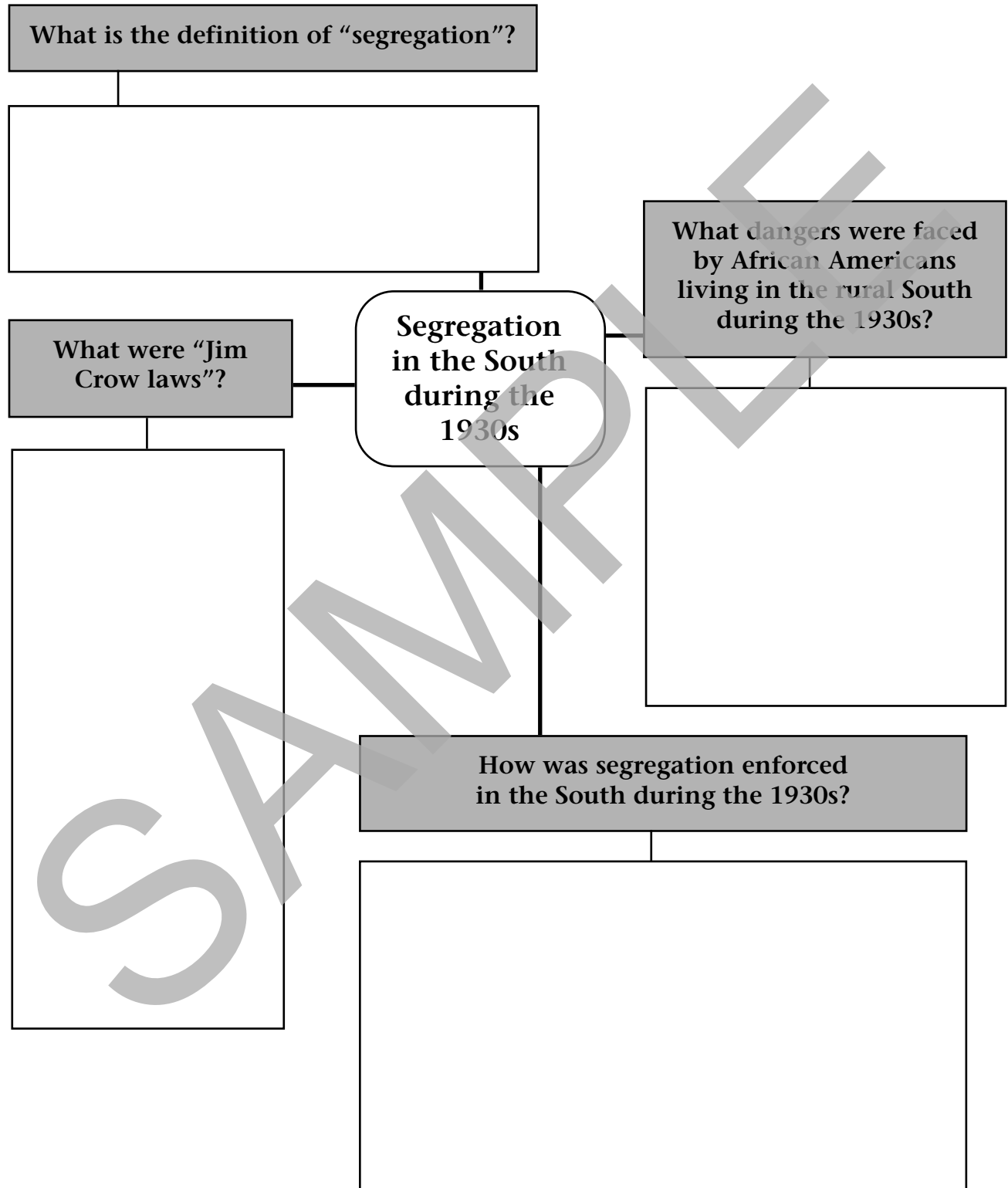
hospitality. When a humiliated Scout advises Atticus to fire Calpurnia, he reiterates his unequivocal respect for the woman, telling Scout, "I've no intention of getting rid of her, now or ever. We couldn't operate a single day without Cal, have you ever thought of that?" [p. 33].)

9. Compare and contrast the Cunninghams and the Ewells. *(While both families are poor, the Cunninghams' poverty is due to legal problems and the bad farming economy, while the Ewells' poverty is due to idleness and Bob Ewell's constant drunkenness. The Cunninghams have a strong work ethic, requiring every child to help with farm chores, while Atticus claims that "none of [the Ewells] had done an honest day's work in his recollection" [p. 40] and they expect to have things handed to them. The Cunninghams also value education more than the Ewells. Walter is glad that he will be able to attend school more often now that one of his younger siblings is working in the fields, while Burris is happy to leave after the first day, saying "...I done done my time for this year" [p. 35]. In addition, the Cunninghams' self-respect translates into their appearance. Walter Cunningham may be constantly barefoot, but he has a clean shirt and neatly mended overalls, while Burris is "the filthiest human [Scout] had ever seen" [p. 35]. Finally, the Cunninghams refuse to take charity, scrupulously repaying others with produce and chores. Mr. Ewell, on the other hand, blithely takes relief checks from the government and subsequently spends them on whiskey instead of feeding his children.)*

Supplementary Activities

1. Using the Setting the Scene chart on page 33 of this guide, describe Maycomb by recalling the information Scout provides about the town. In the first column, list details Scout gives that seem characteristic of the South (e.g., ladies' afternoon naps). In the second column, list details Scout gives that are specific to that era (e.g., Depression-era Hoover carts).
2. Research the educational reforms proposed by John Dewey (which Jem mistakenly confuses with the library catalog Dewey Decimal System created by Melvil Dewey). Write two to three paragraphs explaining how John Dewey changed education.

Concept Map



Who Am I?

Directions: Write a riddle describing a character in the novel. Include adjectives, adverbs, nouns, and verbs that will help other students see this character in their mind's eye. Describe how the person looks, acts, feels, talks, and how other people in the story treat this character. (Do not reveal which character is the answer to your riddle.)

Who am I?
I have

I can

In the story, people say I

Who am I? _____

Characters With Character

Directions: A person's **character** is evaluated by his or her actions, statements, and by the way he or she treats others. For each of the attributes listed in the center of the page, write the name of one character from the novel who has this trait, and the name of a character who does **not** have this trait. After each character's name, give an example of an action or statement which proves you have properly evaluated the character.

Has This Trait		Doesn't Have This Trait
	tells the truth	
	keeps promises	
	considers consequences of actions	
	sacrifices for others	
	listens to others without pre-judging them	
	is a good person	
	is kind and caring	