

Advanced Placement in  
English Literature and Composition

Teaching Unit  
Individual Learning Packet

*To Kill a Mockingbird*

by Harper Lee

Written by Marie Y. Smith

Copyright © 2006 by Prestwick House Inc., P. O. Box 658, Clayton, DE 19938.  
1-800-932-4593. [www.prestwickhouse.com](http://www.prestwickhouse.com) Permission to copy this unit for classroom use is  
extended to purchaser for his or her personal use. This material, in whole or part, may not be  
copied for resale.

ISBN-13 978-1-60389-371-8

Reorder No. 302154

# *To Kill a Mockingbird*

All references come from the Warner Books edition of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, published 1982.

*This book contains religious references and potentially controversial elements, including violence, inappropriate language, sexual relationships, and racial bias.*

## **Objectives**

*By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to:*

1. identify the characteristics of the Southern woman in the early twentieth century.
2. analyze the character growth exhibited by both Scout and Jem.
3. discuss the relationship of Atticus with his children.
4. explain Harper Lee's themes of racism, loss of innocence, and deceptive appearances.
5. compare and contrast traditional Southern social attitudes and Atticus' attitude toward other people.
6. discuss Harper Lee's use of first-person narrative and its implication on the reader's understanding of the story.
7. explain the role of Boo Radley as an absent character (one that the reader does not see).
8. analyze Atticus's character as a representation of justice and equality.
9. describe the impact of social class on characters' attitudes and actions.
10. explain Harper Lee's use of humor, suspense, and allusions as literary techniques.
11. identify and define the literary devices that Harper Lee uses, such as similes, metaphors, and idioms.
12. respond to multiple choice questions similar to those that will appear on the Advanced Placement in English Literature and Composition exam.
13. respond to writing prompts similar to those that will appear on the Advanced Placement in English Literature and Composition exam.

## Lecture Notes

### Harper Lee and *To Kill a Mockingbird*

Many critics say that Harper Lee modeled the character of Scout after herself. Harper Lee was born in Monroeville, Alabama in 1926, so she would have been the same age as Scout when *To Kill a Mockingbird* takes place. Lee's father was a small-town lawyer, just like Atticus Finch, and Harper Lee spent many hours at the local courthouse with her father. Although there is no proof, it is rumored that a mysterious recluse lived in Lee's neighborhood on which the character of Boo Radley is based. Finally, Harper Lee's mother's maiden name was Frances Finch.

In April 1931, in Scottsboro, Alabama, nine African-American men—the youngest being twelve years old—were tried for raping two white women. Medical testimony showed that the two women had not been raped, but the all-white jury convicted the men and sentenced them to death. In six appellate trials, most of the convictions were overturned, and all but one of the men were subsequently freed or paroled. Even though she was only six years old when the first trial took place, this trial had a significant impact on Harper Lee, and it served as the basis for the trial in *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

Harper Lee's close childhood friend was the famous author Truman Capote. Lee and her brother spent their summers playing with Truman, and her friendship with him continued until his death in 1984. She worked as his research assistant when he went to Kansas to write his award-winning novel *In Cold Blood*. Many critics believe that Capote was the model for Lee's character Dill in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Capote supported Lee's book by writing the following for the front flap of the first edition's book jacket:

Someone rare has written this very fine first novel: a writer with the liveliest sense of life and the warmest, most authentic humor. A touching book; and so funny, so likeable.

### Southern Social Structure of the Early 1900s

Following the end of slavery after the Civil War, the social structure of the South changed. The plantation owners and professionals (doctors, lawyers, etc.) made up the upper class, and because farming was becoming much more commercialized, most land owners became prominent businessmen by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The middle class consisted of owners of small farms and small-town business owners. A new lower class emerged that included African-American farmers and unskilled laborers, such as mill workers.

In the 1930s, the South was immersed in the Great Depression. Poverty and unemployment were rampant, with over 13 million Americans having lost their jobs since 1929. Between 1929 and 1932, farm prices fell by over 50 percent, and the average income in 1929 was about \$750, but annual farm income was only about \$275.

## Questions for Research and Discussion

1. Discuss the role of each of these adults in Scout's life: Atticus, Miss Maddie, Calpurnia, Aunt Alexandra, and Boo Radley.
2. How does the relationship between Jem and Scout change as they grow up?
3. How does Scout show that she attempts to follow Atticus' advice to walk in the other person's shoes?
4. Research Harper Lee's life, and identify the similarities and differences between her childhood and the story in *To Kill a Mockingbird*.
5. Discuss Scout's attitude toward ghosts and other superstitions as she progresses through the book, including the significance of the book Atticus selects to read in the last chapter, *The Gray Ghost*.
6. Research the teaching philosophy of John Dewey. Explain how Dewey's philosophy compares to Atticus theory of education and the impact both have on Scout.
7. Find four references to a mockingbird in the novel, and discuss the meaning of each reference.
8. Explain Atticus' definition of a gentleman. Cite examples of Jem's increasing understanding of this definition and the impact on his behavior.
9. Identify examples throughout the book in which the adult Scout reflects on the events that the child Scout is describing. For each example, explain how this affects your understanding of the novel.
10. Research the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, and discuss the impact this movement would have in a town such as Maycomb.
11. Research the Scottsboro trial, and explore the parallels between Scottsboro and Maycomb. Identify the causes that lead to each trial, the racial implications of the verdicts, and the impact each trial has on the community.

# *To Kill a Mockingbird*

## Advanced Placement in English Literature and Composition Teaching Unit

### Study Guide Student Copy

#### Chapter 1

1. What narrative point of view does Harper Lee use to begin the story?
2. What can the reader expect to learn from this narrative point of view?
3. What is the setting of the story? How does Harper Lee use this setting to set the tone?
4. Why does Jem tell Scout (the narrator) not to ask Dill about his father? What can the reader infer about Jem and Scout's relationship from this exchange?
5. Briefly describe how the Radleys are different from the other people in Maycomb.

## Chapter 10

1. Briefly describe Atticus' character.
2. In the following quotation, what is the meaning of "tooth and nail," and what type of literary expression is this?

"I would not fight publicly for Atticus, but the family was private ground. I would fight anyone from a third cousin upwards tooth and nail." (p. 90)

3. According to Scout's narrative, what is the children's impression of Atticus?
4. How does Lee occasionally offer the reader an adult perspective of Scout's narrative?
5. How does the children's picture of Tim Johnson compare with Calpurnia's description of the dog when she calls Mr. Finch and Miss Eula May? Why does Lee include this event in the story?

## Chapter 20

1. What is Lee's purpose for inserting Raymond's conversation with Scout and Dill in the middle of the drama of the trial?
2. Why does Raymond constantly carry a brown bag with Coca-Cola in it? What does the bag represent?
3. Why did Atticus remove his coat, loosen his tie, and unbutton his vest?
4. What type of literary device does Atticus use when he says, "This case is as simple as black and white?" (p. 203) How is Atticus's choice of words ironic?
5. What was Lee's purpose in having Atticus identify the court as the only place that all men are equal?

## Chapter 30

1. What does Scout mean when she says, "...then I understood. The livingroom lights were awfully strong?" (p. 271)
2. How does Lee help Scout see Boo Radley as a human being rather than the monster that she and Jem had always considered him?
3. Why does Heck Tate want to cover up the real cause of Ewell's death? How does Atticus misinterpret this?
4. What does Atticus' refusal to avoid a trial for Jem show about his character?
5. Briefly discuss Scout's reference to the mockingbird when Atticus asks if she understands Tate's decision.
6. Why is Tate so adamant about protecting Arthur Radley? How does Lee show the reader Tate's intent?
7. Which character learns the most about human nature in this chapter?



## Chapter 31

1. What is the significance of Scout's guiding Arthur Radley through the house and then to his own home?
2. What does Scout mean when she says, "Autumn again, and Boo's children needed him?" (p. 279)
3. Why does Lee have Atticus read *The Gray Ghost* to Scout?
4. What is the significance of Atticus putting Scout to bed after she falls asleep in Jem's room?