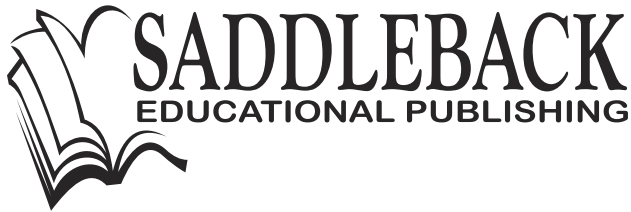


# *Focus* **ON READING**

*To Kill a  
Mockingbird*

LISA McCARTY

This is a sample not intended for classroom use.



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# Introduction/Classroom Management

## WELCOME TO *FOCUS ON READING*

*Focus on Reading* literature study guides are designed to help all students comprehend and analyze their reading. Many teachers have grappled with the question of how to make quality literature accessible to all students. Students who are already avid readers of quality literature are motivated to read and are familiar with prereading and reading strategies. However, struggling readers frequently lack basic reading skills and are not equipped with the prior knowledge and reading strategies to thoroughly engage in the classroom literature experience.

*Focus on Reading* is designed to make teachers' and students' lives easier! How? By providing materials that allow all students to take part in reading quality literature. Each *Focus on Reading* study guide contains activities that focus on vocabulary and comprehension skills that students need to get the most from their reading. In addition, each section within the guide contains a before-reading **Focus Your Reading** page containing tools to ensure success: **Vocabulary Words to Know**, **Things to Know**, and **Questions to Think About**. These study aids will help students who may not have the prior knowledge they need to truly comprehend the reading.

## USING *FOCUS ON READING*

*Focus on Reading* is designed to make it easy for you to meet the individual needs of students who require additional reading skills support. Each *Focus on Reading* study guide contains teacher and student support materials, reproducible student activity sheets, an end-of-book test, and an answer key.

- **Focus on the Book**, a convenient reference page for the teacher, provides a brief overview of the entire book including a synopsis, information about the setting, author data, and historical background.
- **Focus Your Knowledge**, a reference page for students, is a whole-book, prereading activity designed to activate prior knowledge and immerse students in the topic.

The study guide divides the novel into 6 manageable sections to make it easy to plan classroom time. Five activities are devoted to each section of the novel.

## Before Reading

- **Focus Your Reading** consists of 3 prereading sections:

**Vocabulary Words to Know** lists and defines 10 vocabulary words students will encounter in their reading. Students will not have to interrupt their reading to look up, ask for, or spend a lot of time figuring out the meaning of unfamiliar words. These words are later studied in-depth within the lesson.

**Things to Know** identifies terms or concepts that are integral to the reading but that may not be familiar to today's students. This section is intended to "level the playing field" for those students who may not have much prior knowledge about the time period, culture, or theme of the book. It also gets students involved with the book, increasing interest before they begin reading.

**Questions to Think About** helps students focus on the main ideas and important details they should be looking for as they read. This activity helps give students a *purpose* for reading. The goal of these guiding questions is to build knowledge, confidence, and comfort with the topics in the reading.

## During Reading

- **Build Your Vocabulary** presents the 10 unit focus words in the exact context of the book. Students are then asked to write their own definitions and sentences for the words.
- **Check Your Understanding: Multiple Choice** offers 10 multiple-choice, literal comprehension questions for each section.

**Check Your Understanding: Short Answer** contains 10 short-answer questions based on the reading.

## After Reading

- **Deepen Your Understanding** is a writing activity that extends appreciation and analysis of the book. This activity focuses on critical-thinking skills and literary analysis.
- **End-of-Book Test** contains 20 multiple-choice items covering the book. These items ask questions that require students to synthesize the information in the book and make inferences in their answers.

## CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

*Focus on Reading* is very flexible. It can be used by the whole class, by small groups, or by individuals. Each study guide divides the novel into 6 manageable units of study.

This literature comprehension program is simple to use. Just photocopy the lessons and distribute them at the appropriate time as students read the novel.

You may want to reproduce and discuss the **Focus Your Knowledge** page before distributing the paperbacks. This page develops and activates prior knowledge to ensure that students have a grounding in the book before beginning reading. After reading this whole-book prereading page, students are ready to dive into the book.

The **Focus Your Reading** prereading activities are the keystone of this program. They prepare students for what they are going to read, providing focus for the complex task of reading. These pages should be distributed before students actually begin reading the corresponding section of the novel. There are no questions to be answered on these pages; these are for reference and support during reading. Students may choose to take notes on these pages as they read. This will also give students a study tool for review before the **End-of-Book Test**.

The **Focus Your Reading** pages also provide an excellent bridge to home. Parents, mentors, tutors, or

other involved adults can review vocabulary words with students, offer their own insights about the historical and cultural background outlined, and become familiar with the ideas students will be reading about. This can help families talk to students in a meaningful way about their reading, and it gives the adults something concrete to ask about to be sure that students are reading and understanding.

The **Build Your Vocabulary** and **Check Your Understanding: Multiple Choice** and **Short Answer** activities should be distributed when students begin reading the corresponding section of the novel. These literature guide pages are intended to help students comprehend and retain what they read; they should be available for students to refer to at any time during the reading.

**Deepen Your Understanding** is an optional extension activity that goes beyond literal questions about the book, asking students for their own ideas and opinions—and the reasons behind them. These postreading activities generally focus on literary analysis.

As reflected in its title, the **End-of-Book Test** is a postreading comprehension test to be completed after the entire novel has been read.

For your convenience, a clear **Answer Key** simplifies the scoring process.

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# Focus on the Book

## Synopsis

The narrator and protagonist of the story is Scout Finch, a six-year-old girl (at the beginning of the story) who lives with her brother, Jem, and their widowed father, Atticus. The story takes place in the small Alabama town of Maycomb during the Great Depression.

Jem, Scout, and their friend Dill become fascinated with their recluse neighbor Arthur Radley, nicknamed Boo, who has not been seen outside of his house for years. The children act out the story of Boo Radley from rumors they have heard. The children find gifts in a knothole of a tree on the Radley property and imagine that Boo left them. Other incidents lead the children to believe that Boo Radley may not be the evil person the rumors suggest.

Atticus, a prominent lawyer, agrees to defend a black man named Tom Robinson, who has been unjustly accused of raping a white woman. As a result of Atticus's decision, Jem and Scout are harassed by other children, while their father faces disapproval and angry mobs. Atticus does his best to defend Tom Robinson.

Scout has faith in the goodness of the people in her community. As the novel progresses, this faith is tested by the hatred and prejudice that emerge during the trial. Scout eventually develops a more mature understanding that allows her to keep her faith in human goodness without being blind to human evil.

## About the Author

Nelle Harper Lee was born in 1926 in Monroeville, Alabama. Located in southwest Alabama about halfway between Montgomery and Mobile, Monroeville is thought to be the model for Maycomb in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The youngest of four children, Lee studied law at the University of Alabama and studied one year at Oxford University. She spent the 1950s working for Eastern Airlines and writing short stories. Her father's sudden illness forced her to divide her time between New York and Monroeville. On the suggestion of her editor, Lee developed one of her short stories into her only novel, *To Kill A Mockingbird*, published in 1960. *To Kill a Mockingbird* won the 1961 Pulitzer Prize and spent eighty weeks on the bestseller list. The novel has been translated into forty languages.

## Historical Background

The setting of *To Kill a Mockingbird* is a small southern town during the early 1930s—the time of the Great Depression. One of the causes of the Great Depression was the stock market crash. From the end of World War I in 1919, the stock market prices kept rising. On October 24, 1929, the stock market crashed. Stock prices plummeted. On that one day, the value of stocks fell fourteen billion dollars. Businesses started to lay off people. Small stores closed their doors. Millions of people lost all their savings. Many people ended up sleeping in shelters for the unemployed, standing in breadlines, and eating in soup kitchens. A few people profited from the Great Depression, but most were left with little money.

Alabama was a Confederate state during the Civil War. At that time, most white residents in Alabama viewed slavery as an integral part of their economic and social systems, and they opposed attempts to abolish it. Montgomery, Alabama, was the Confederate capital until May 1861. Alabama contributed about 100,000 troops to the Confederacy, and perhaps 25% of them died during the Civil War. During the 1930s, race relations between blacks and whites were still strained and marked by prejudice. As depicted in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, there were many white people during this time who believed in and supported racial equality, but many people were still prejudiced against blacks.

It was not until the 1950s and 1960s, well after the time period for the setting of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, that civil rights efforts took off. Race relations were a major issue in Alabama in the 1950s and 1960s, as civil rights advocates worked to end racial segregation in the state. During 1955–1956 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. organized a black boycott that ended racially separate seating on municipal buses in Montgomery. In 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled racial segregation in public schools to be unconstitutional. In 1963, four black children were killed when a bomb exploded in their Birmingham church. The incident, widely deplored in the nation, helped to pass the federal Civil Rights Act of 1964. In 1965, the U.S. Congress passed the Voting Rights Act, which helped add many African Americans to the voting rolls in Alabama.

## Focus Your Knowledge

*To Kill a Mockingbird* takes place in a small, rural, southern town in the 1930s. The setting of the novel is important because it affects how the characters interact with one another. The setting greatly influences the atmosphere, or background feeling, of the story.

- When you think of a small southern town during the 1930s, what comes to mind? How is the town laid out? Is there a town center? What types of buildings would you picture in town?
- Now, imagine being a child in this town during the summer. What would you do for fun? How would you occupy your days? How do you think these activities would be different from how a child might spend the summer today?
- Imagine that you are a white child in this small southern town. Are there different classes of white people? Are there black people in your neighborhood? Do you go to school with black children? Do you have black servants? What do black people think of your family?
- As you read *To Kill a Mockingbird*, you will experience the events from the perspective of a young white girl who happens to be a tomboy. What is your image of a southern lady? As you read the novel, imagine the frustration and confusion that Scout, the young girl, feels as she is faced with the stereotype of a southern lady.

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## Focus Your Reading

### Vocabulary Words to Know

Study the following words and definitions. You will meet these words in your reading. Be sure to jot down in your word journal any other unknown words from the reading.

**detachment**—indifference; absence of prejudice or bias

**tyrannical**—having absolute authority

**revelation**—the act of revealing or disclosing

**asylum**—an institution for the care of people with physical or mental impairments

**entailment**—to limit the inheritance of property to a specified succession of heirs; the state of being entailed

**contentious**—quarrelsome

**disapprobation**—moral disapproval; condemnation

**auspicious**—attended by favorable circumstances; favorable

**arbitrated**—decided in or as in the manner of a judge

**edification**—intellectual, moral, or spiritual improvement; enlightenment

### Things to Know

Here is some background information about this section of the book.

**Maycomb**, Alabama, is the small southern town where *To Kill a Mockingbird* takes place.

*The Gray Ghost* is a book written by Seckatary Hawkins. Hawkins is the pseudonym, or pen name, of Robert F. Schulkers.

Meridian, Mississippi, is the town where Dill lives during the school year.

**Hookworms** are parasites that usually enter the body through bare feet and move through the body to the small intestines. There they attach themselves with a series of hooks around their mouths.

**Indian-head** pennies are pennies with a picture of an Indian head on the front side. This U. S. one-cent coin was issued from 1859 until 1909. After that, the one-cent coin was issued with the wheat sheaf on the reverse and Lincoln on the front. This penny is called the Wheat Penny.

“**Foot-washing Baptist**” refers to a religious fanatic, someone who believes that all pleasure is sinful.

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## *Focus Your Reading*

### *Questions to Think About*

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The following questions will help you understand the meaning of what you read. You do not have to write out the answers to these questions. Instead, look at them before you begin reading, and think about them while you are reading.

1. Why do you think Scout and Jem are friends with Dill? What does Dill bring to the friendship?
2. How is school different in the book for the children of Maycomb County from what it is today? How do different characters in the book feel about education?
3. How do you think Scout feels about Calpurnia?
4. Why are the children so interested in Boo Radley?
5. How do Scout and Jem feel about their father? Do they respect his wishes?

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*Build Your Vocabulary*

Read the sentences below. On the line, write your definition of the word in bold type. Then, on another sheet of paper, use that word in a new sentence of your own.

1. “Jem and I found our father satisfactory: he played with us, read to us, and treated us with courteous **detachment**.”

detachment: \_\_\_\_\_

2. “She had been with us ever since Jem was born, and I had felt her **tyrannical** presence as long as I could remember.”

tyrannical: \_\_\_\_\_

3. “Dill had seen *Dracula*, a **revelation** that moved Jem to eye him with the beginning of respect.”

revelation: \_\_\_\_\_

4. “Miss Stephanie said old Mr. Radley said no Radley was going to any **asylum**, when it was suggested that a season in Tuscaloosa might be helpful to Boo.”

asylum: \_\_\_\_\_

5. “**Entailment** was only a part of Mr. Cunningham’s vexations. The acres not entailed were mortgaged to the hilt. . . .”

entailment: \_\_\_\_\_

6. “‘Ain’t got no mother,’ was the answer, ‘and their paw’s [father’s] right **contentious**.’”

contentious: \_\_\_\_\_

7. “‘Scout, you’d better not say anything about our agreement. . . . I’m afraid our activities would be received with considerable **disapprobation** by the more learned authorities.’”

disapprobation: \_\_\_\_\_

8. “The remainder of my schooldays were no more **auspicious** than the first.”

auspicious: \_\_\_\_\_

9. “Dill said he ought to be first, he just got here. Jem **arbitrated**, awarded me first push with an extra time for Dill, and I folded myself inside the tire.”

arbitrated: \_\_\_\_\_

10. “‘No,’ said Atticus, ‘putting his life’s history on display for the **edification** of the neighborhood.’”

edification: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Check Your Understanding

### Multiple Choice

Circle the letter of the best answer to each question.

- Where do Atticus, Scout, and Jem Finch live?
  - Maycomb, Alabama
  - Meridian, Mississippi
  - Montgomery, Alabama
- Who is Calpurnia?
  - a kind neighbor
  - the Finches' cook
  - Scout's grade-school teacher
- What happened to Scout and Jem's mother?
  - She died of a heart attack.
  - She's in a mental institution.
  - She left Maycomb to live with her sister in Montgomery.
- Who taught Scout how to read?
  - her father
  - Miss Maudie
  - her brother, Jem
- How do the Ewell children feel about school?
  - School is a waste of time, and they do not attend.
  - They attend school just like the other children in the town.
  - They are home-schooled and learn to read and write from their father.
- Jem and Scout look forward to summer, to sleeping on the porch and in the tree house. Who do they look forward to spending time with in the summer?
  - Dill
  - Uncle Jack
  - Boo Radley
- What do Jem and Scout find in the knot-hole of an oak tree at the Radley place?
  - a silver bell
  - a prayer book
  - Indian-head pennies
- How do Scout and Jem feel about their neighbor, Miss Maudie?
  - They are afraid of her.
  - They consider her a friend.
  - They don't pay much attention to her.
- What do the children want Boo Radley to do?
  - to move out of town
  - to come out of the house
  - to send the children a letter
- How does Atticus feel about the children disturbing the Radleys?
  - He finds it amusing.
  - He isn't aware of the children's activities.
  - He wants them to leave the Radleys alone.

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## Check Your Understanding

### Short Answer

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Write a short answer for each question.

1. How would you describe Dill's personality? What does he like to do? What type of stories does he tell?
2. How does Miss Caroline react when she learns that Scout already knows how to read?
3. How does Mr. Cunningham pay Atticus Finch for his legal services?
4. How does Burris Ewell behave in school? Does he respect Miss Caroline?
5. How does Calpurnia feel when Scout begins school?
6. What is the first thing that Scout finds in the oak tree on the Radleys' property?
7. Why are Scout and Jem so afraid when Scout gets rolled inside the tire? Where does she end up?
8. Scout, Jem, and Dill entertain themselves by acting out a drama. What story do they act out?
9. How does Miss Maudie show her affection for Scout and Jem?
10. What is Jem, Scout, and Dill's first attempt to communicate with Boo Radley?

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## *Deepen Your Understanding*

*Mood* refers to the climate of feeling, or atmosphere, created by the author. How do the rumors about Boo Radley and his family's history affect the mood? Does the mood help spark your interest in Boo Radley? Are you curious, or frightened? Give specific examples of passages that create the mood from the first five chapters of the book.

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