Before You Read

To Kill a Mockingbird, Twelve through Twenty-one

FOCUS ACTIVITY

What do you think is involved in making a fair judgment about a person or situation? Explain.

Quickwrite

Describe on paper an everyday situation in which one person might judge another incorrectly. What things can interfere with making a fair judgment?

Setting a Purpose

Read to find out how the jury in Maycomb judges Tom Robinson.

BACKGROUND

Did You Know?

Chapters twelve through twenty-one focus mainly on Tom Robinson’s dramatic courtroom trial. Trials are a cornerstone of the criminal justice system in the United States. Any citizen accused of a crime has the right to a trial by an impartial (unbiased) jury. This right is guaranteed in Article 6 of the Bill of Rights. An important principle of the justice system is that a person accused of a crime is presumed innocent until proven guilty. This assumption requires the prosecution (the side arguing that the accused is guilty) to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that the accused person committed the crime. If this is not proven, and the jury members are left with doubts about the person’s guilt, they must find the accused innocent.

Conflict

At the heart of every novel is conflict, the struggle between two opposing forces. In an external conflict, a character struggles against some outside force, such as another person, nature, society, or fate. An internal conflict is a struggle between two opposing thoughts or desires within the mind of a character. As you read chapters twelve through twenty-one, notice how the external and internal conflicts introduced in the first section intensify.

VOCABULARY PREVIEW

antagonize [æntəɡˈnʌiz] v. to stir up anger; to oppose
contradict [kənˈtrædikt] v. to assert the contrary or opposite of
convict [kənˈvikt] v. to prove or declare guilty
reluctantly [rɪˈlʌktəntli] adv. unwillingly
sullen [ˈsʌlən] adj. silently gloomy or unfriendly
testimony [ˈtestəmoʊni] n. evidence given in court
verdict [ˈvɜːrɪdikt] n. judgment by a jury
Active Reading
To Kill a Mockingbird, Twelve through Twenty-one

During the trial, Atticus questions four witnesses. As you read, complete the chart below by noting the key information given by each witness during questioning. Also note how each witness behaves on the stand, commenting on the general impression the witness makes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Witness</th>
<th>Key Information</th>
<th>Impression</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sheriff Tate:</td>
<td>No doctor was called to the scene. Mayella had bruises on the right side of her face.</td>
<td>businesslike, straightforward</td>
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</table>
Personal Response
As you followed the action in the courtroom, which character did you empathize with most? least? Explain.

Analyzing Literature
Recall and Interpret
1. What tense situation occurs at the county jail? How does Scout help her father in this scene?

2. How does Atticus show that Tom Robinson could not have committed the crime he is accused of?

3. According to Atticus, what is Mayella’s motive for accusing Tom? What assumption does Atticus fear the jury will make?
Responding
To Kill a Mockingbird, Twelve through Twenty-one

Analyzing Literature (continued)

Evaluate and Connect

4. What strategies does the author use to make sure readers will feel some sympathy for Mayella Ewell?

5. Do you think a jury today, presented with the same evidence, would have found Tom Robinson guilty? Explain.

Literature and Writing

News Story
Write an objective news report of Tom Robinson’s trial. Keep the five Ws in mind: who, what, where, when, and why. Describe the trial thoroughly, accurately, and objectively. At the same time, use descriptive details to try to make your readers feel they are part of the scene.

Extending Your Response

Literature Groups
In his summary to the jury, Atticus says:

[T]here is one way in this country in which all men are created equal—there is one human institution that makes a pauper the equal of a Rockefeller, the stupid man the equal of an Einstein, and the ignorant man the equal of any college president. That institution . . . is the court.

Review your Quickwrite from the Focus Activity. Then debate the truth of the statement above, citing evidence from the novel as well as from real-life situations.

Internet Connection
Discuss To Kill a Mockingbird with other students on the Internet. One Web site that offers a discussion group is presented by the Prince William County Public Schools. (Click on “Discussion Groups” at http://library.advanced.org/12111/index.html.) This site was established in honor of the thirty-fifth anniversary of the film based on the novel. It also features historical background on the novel and links to sites with information about the making of the movie. To prepare for the online discussion, get together with a partner and brainstorm a few questions about the novel, the setting, or the movie that you would like answered. Present to your class, an oral report featuring interesting information you discover.

Save your work for your portfolio.