Before You Read

To Kill a Mockingbird, Twenty-two through Thirty-one

FOCUS ACTIVITY

What does it mean to “put yourself in another person’s shoes”? What personal qualities are necessary to be able to see things as someone else does?

Sharing Experiences

In a small group, discuss different situations in which you learned something by putting yourself in another person’s shoes. What made it possible to adopt a different perspective? What was difficult about the experience?

Setting a Purpose

Read to find out what Scout learns about different perspectives and about justice in the concluding section of the novel.

BACKGROUND

Did You Know?

Many people, including Harper Lee, consider the film To Kill a Mockingbird to be highly faithful to the novel. In fact, after seeing the film, many think that the dialogue was taken word for word from the novel. "This is simply not so," says the novel's author, commenting on the screenplay by Horton Foote. “Scenes humorous, scenes tender, scenes terrifying, each with a definite purpose and value, blended so delicately with the original, created the illusion that these were Harper Lee’s words." In further praise of the screenplay, Lee says, “For me, Maycomb is there, its people are there: in two short hours one lives a childhood and lives it with Atticus Finch, whose view of life was the heart of the novel.” The 1962 film won three Academy Awards.

Climax

Although the trial contains many suspenseful moments, the novel actually reaches its highest dramatic point in this last portion of the book. This high point is called the climax. All of the preceding events in the plot lead up to this point of highest tension. This last section also joins two seemingly separate strands of the plot: the trial of Tom Robinson and the mystery of Boo Radley. As you read the conclusion of To Kill a Mockingbird, note how the final events bring these two stories together.

VOCABULARY PREVIEW

- aggravate [ag´ra vāt´] v. to make worse
- apprehension [ap´ri hen´shən] n. fear about a future event
- impertinence [im purt´an ans] n. rudeness; improper behavior
- inevitable [i nev´ə tə bəl] adj. impossible to avoid
The outcome of the trial affects many of the characters in the novel. For some, it triggers strong feelings or thoughtful reflections. For others, it leads to action. As you read, think about the effect of the trial’s outcome on different characters. Use the chart to identify each character and describe the effect that the trial’s outcome has on each. Use as many ovals as you need.

Jem: feels disillusioned, outraged; cries

Tom Robinson’s trial (cause)

[Diagram with ovals connected by arrows]
Responding
To Kill a Mockingbird, Twenty-two through Thirty-one

Personal Response
Did the ending of the novel surprise you? If you were the author, would you have ended the story differently? Explain.

Analyzing Literature
Recall and Interpret
  1. After the trial, how do the children and Atticus respond to Bob Ewell’s threats?

  2. What happens to Scout and Jem on the way home from the school pageant? What does the incident reveal about Boo Radley?

  3. How does Scout treat Boo after the incident? How have her feelings about Boo changed?
Responding
To Kill a Mockingbird, Twenty-two through Thirty-one

Analyzing Literature (continued)

Evaluate and Connect

4. Do you believe that Sheriff Tate and Atticus made the best decision about how to report Bob Ewell’s death? Why or why not?

5. Because of Atticus, the white jury took much longer than expected to reach its decision in Tom’s case. Miss Maudie sees this as a “baby step” forward for the community. Do you think the cause of justice is best advanced through such “baby steps”? Explain.

Literature and Writing

Personal Letter
What do you think Scout and Jem learn about perspective and justice from witnessing the trial and their father’s role in it? What do they learn from their experiences with Bob Ewell and Boo Radley? Imagine that you are Scout or Jem as an adult. Write a letter to a friend in which you reflect on these experiences and what they taught you about life.

Extending Your Response

Literature Groups
In the final section of the novel, two characters are compared to the mockingbird. In your group, find and reread the passages (in chapters twenty-five and thirty) that identify the two characters. Then discuss these questions, as well as others that come to mind: Why is the mockingbird an appropriate symbol for these two characters? In what ways are the two characters similar? In what ways are they different? Be sure to cite evidence from the novel in your discussion.

Music Connection
Put yourself in Boo Radley’s shoes. Think back to the Focus Activity and try to imagine yourself in Boo’s life and mind. Then, create lyrics for a song that captures what it might be like to have experienced life as Boo Radley did. For inspiration, you might listen to the song by the Beatles called “Nowhere Man.”

Save your work for your portfolio.
Responding
To Kill a Mockingbird

Personal Response
Harper Lee's novel is full of interesting and richly painted characters. Which character was your favorite and why?

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Writing About the Novel
Many readers have said that reading To Kill a Mockingbird “made a difference” in their lives. How did the novel affect you? Do you think the novel ultimately paints a positive or negative picture of relations between blacks and whites? On a separate sheet of paper, write a personal response about how the novel affected your ideas of personal courage in the face of injustice. Refer to elements of the plot and specific characters to support your comments.